





# THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

OCTOBER 30 1981

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# The end of the Grand Manner

By Graham Reynolds

WILLIAM L. PRESSLY:  
The Life and Art of James Barry  
320pp. Yale University Press. £25.  
0 300 02466 5

In his fourth Discourse, delivered in 1771, Sir Joshua Reynolds urged the students of the Royal Academy to choose subjects which were compatible with the Grand Style. These must be dignified and of universal concern. "Such are the great events of Greek and Roman history and his- tory, which early education have made familiar, and interesting to all Europe." By turning the minds of his young auditors in this epic direction Reynolds was creating a number of problems for them. In fact his advice went against the trend of his time, which did not encourage the grand, the heroic, the historical. It was con- fusing at the start that he should equal "history" with "fable" and suggest that they were both as read- ily adapted to the needs of painters and their potential public. Certainly it was not difficult for politicians, journalists and the leaders of society to find close parallels between Roman history and the happenings of their own times. Edmund Burke, a generous but hardly used patron of James Barry, modelled himself upon Cicero, and it is easy to see the similarity in the approach of these two statesmen to politics. Turner's robust patriotism was to be gloomily pervaded by the disturbing resembl- ances he saw between his country and the last stages of the Carthagi- nian Empire. But what relevance had the loves of Jupiter and Juno on Mount Ida to that rationalistic age? It was difficult enough to obtain a commission to paint biblical scenes in this nominally Christian country. Unless Greek myth was to supply an excuse for an exercise in erotic paint- ing - and Barry would have indig- nantly denied such a motive when he painted this subject - it had no living significance for patrons or the view- ing public.

The career on which Reynolds wished his students to embark made severe demands on their literary knowledge. How far was he justified in assuming that these aspiring artists in the Academy Schools had fol- lowed that "usual course of reading"

which made Greek and Roman life and thought familiar to all Europe? Perhaps this was so in France. Edmund R., the hero of *Le Paysan Parvenu*, was accepted as an appren- tice to an Auxerre painter on the grounds that "he loves reading, and knows the Bible by heart, and as for Latin he understands it well, and also a little Greek, and M. le Curé says that these are sufficient accom- plishments for what he wants to do." Richard Wilson could quote Horace to effect on any occasion, but more active exponents of the Grand Style were often far less well equipped. Benjamin West, who may fairly be said to have taken the lead in British history painting in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was so ill prepared for this role that drastic educational measures had to be de- vised to help him achieve his ambi- tion. When he was first commis- sioned in Philadelphia to paint a classical subject, he had to confess that he had never heard of the death of Socrates or any similar episode in ancient history. Dr Drummond, hav- ing proposed that he should paint the story of Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus, sent for his Tacitus and read aloud to the artist the passage he wanted him to illus- trate, with many suggestions about the treatment of detail. George III emulated this example by reading out to West the passage in Livy describing the departure of Regulus, on which he had commissioned a painting. William L. Pressly does not tell us how severely Barry, who grew up in Cork, suffered from such a handicap, but an early biographer said that he knew little Latin and virtually no Greek, using translations and the dictionary to puzzle out the texts; yet he adds that he was ex- tremely well informed in classical learning.

Literary influences apart, the essential training ground for a histori- cal artist was in ancient and Ren- aissance art. This made a visit to Rome a necessity, and the generosity of Edmund and William Burke en- abled Barry to live and study there from 1766 till 1770. Whilst he was in Rome he gave evidence of the ques- relsome and paranoid disposition which would bedevil his whole career. But he was a diligent and reflective student and laid down for himself there the artistic principles

from which he never thereafter deviated. He thought the art of Greek and Roman antiquity superior to any in the modern world, and at its high- est when dealing with "the naked". He planned to instil lofty ideals through his painting, in particular by means of ambitious decorative cycles embodying noble and uplifting themes. Furthermore, he was out- raged by the clinics of Winckelmann and du Bos that the British climate made it impossible for the islands to produce creditable painting, and he resolved to refute them by his own productions and in his writings on art.

His first ambitious composition embodied his dedication to classical tradition. An epigram by Glaucus describes a painting by Parrhasius



James Barry, Self-Portrait c. 1802.

which showed the wounded Philote- tes abandoned to his sufferings on the island of Lemnos. Barry set out to re-create this lost work, an "em- inent instance of heroic action, or heroic suffering", themes which Reynolds had commended to his stu- dents as proper and generally in- teresting subject-matter. When his subsequent attempt to re-create the painting by Apelles of Venus Anadyomene was exhibited at the Academy in 1772, it led to one of those social disasters to which he was prone, and which caused his increas- ing alienation from society. He had been denounced as an impostor when he announced that he was the youthful prodigy who had painted "The Baptism of the King of

Cashel", which had met with great success in Dublin in 1763. Now he had the mortification of hearing Horace Walpole laugh derisively as he stood next to the artist in front of his "Venus Rising from the Sea".

There had been previous attempts at large decorative schemes in Eng- land: Thornhill's paintings in the dome of St. Paul's, Hogarth's dec- orations in the Hospital of St. Barth- olomew, the Vauxhall Gardens paintings, were all conceived in an expensive vein. Barry's first scheme for six vast religious paintings for St. Paul's, to be painted by Academicians, including Reynolds, West and himself, came to nothing through the opposition of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. Their scruples were presumably similar to those which led George III to hesitate before he allowed West to decorate a chapel at Windsor Cas- tle. Remitting the decision to a com- mittee of bishops, he told them, "If it is conceived that I am tacitly bound, as Head of the Church of England, to prevent any such orna- ments from being introduced into places of worship; or if it be consid- ered as at all savouring in any de- gree of a popish practice, however decidedly I may myself think it in- nocent, I will proceed no further in the business." The bishops tacitly con- cluded that even a Quaker might contemplate West's proposed sub- jects with edification.

The frustration of the plan for St Paul's led Barry to undertake single- handed an even more ambitious project. In 1777 he offered to decorate the Great Room of the Society of Arts in the Adelphi with a historical cycle embodying subjects of his own devising. His offer was accepted on the condition that he should paint the vast canvases without fee, the Society undertaking only to buy the materials. Barry's programme traced the progress of civilization from Ancient Greece, from barbarism to the Golden Age, and in contempo- rary England through the encourage- ment of trade and manufacture. It culminated in a scene of "Elysium and Tartarus" in which the artist enrolled among the 128 figures of the cleft, Confucius, Ossian, Fénelon, William Mason and Giles Hussey. Despite some absurdities, such as the presence of Dr Burney, in the

"Apotheosis of the Thames", "in company with a party of naked girls dabbled in a horse-pond", the cycle of six paintings tests its humanistic theme with appropriate seriousness and intellectual power. It is one of the most successful schemes of its kind in this country, yet it has re- mained surprisingly little known.

In defending the British Isles against the charge of philistinism Barry was obliged to rely more on examples from literature than from the visual arts. He admitted that British painting had been artificially depressed by religious taboos. He varied his own exploration of ancient myth with subject-matter drawn from Shakespeare and Milton. His first exhibit at the Royal Academy, in- tended to suit up the results of his studies in Rome, was an "Adam and Eve" based not on the Bible but on the interpretation in a classical mould, remarking that "Adam and Eve are figures in the truly Grecian style; they are undecayed, save with their own naked majesty; their beauties result from the superior excellence of their construction." When he embarked upon a series of designs from *Paradise Lost* in the 1790s he was imbued with Edmund Burke's view of Milton as a source of sub- lime images. The extent to which his concentrated effort to complete the Society of Arts project had sapped his energy is shown by his failure to carry out his full plan. Pressly estab- lishes that only twelve compositions have survived from a more compre- hensive list and that of these only two were oil sketches; the remainder were drawings or engravings. But the prints include the "Satan, Sin and Death" in which he achieved a pro- foundly lacking in Hogarth's earlier painting of the same theme.

Foremost amongst the distractions in the last decade of the eighteenth century was his quarrel with the Royal Academy. Elected Professor of Painting in 1782, he soon embarked upon open abuse of the President and of the Academy's pol- icy. Some of his proposals for re- form were admirable; for instance, he wanted the Academy to set up a permanent collection of Old Master paintings for the benefit of its stu- dents, as a sort of forerunner of the National Gallery. But he was hardly likely to endure himself by hinting

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that Reynolds's studio in Leicester Square was a house of ascription, and when he polished his attacks in an open letter to the *Illustrated Society* his conduct became too objectionable for a number of his fellow-Academicians. In manoeuvres not conspicuous for the element of natural justice he was not only deprived of his professional chair, but also stripped of his status as Academician. George III, who was apprehensive about the number of Academicians with republican sympathies, took considerable pleasure in annulling his Diploma. But it was manifestly unjust that the decisions should have been taken without Barry having been informed of the charges against him. His few sympathizers, such as Opie, Beechey and Copley, were powerless against the organizing ability of Farington, who detected Barry and appears in this episode as the real lender of an inner cabal.

It is surprising that there was no concerted protest by Barry's students against his dismissal. They were an obstreperous enough body; so much bread was being thrown about amidst the plaster casts that his issue for rubbing out was abolished in 1796. They had been delighted by Barry's polemics, but the most powerful dissenting voice was unheard at the time. William Blake, in his bitterly critical marginalia on Reynolds's lectures, wrote: "While Sir Joshua was rolling in riches, Barry was Poor and Unemployed except by his own energy."

On the face of it Blake's main contention is true. Reynolds taught his students to follow the Grand Style, yet founded his own prosperity upon portrait-painting; Barry followed the path Reynolds advocated, yet could paint only one scheme, and to do so had to forgo material reward. But a closer examination of the facts reveals that the contrast is not quite so stark. The more ambitious portraits of Reynolds, such as "Three Ladies adorning a Teren of Hymen", show him elevating a group portrait into a history painting. Conversely, the genre of Barry's painting, which is most accessible to contemporary taste is his portraiture. His plan for the Society of Arts involved his taking or copying a vast number of likenesses. He had already injected a note of originality into the historical group portrait in his "Burke and Barry in the Characters of Ulysses and a Companion fleeing from the Cave of Polyphemus", and had challenged the achievement of the main portrait-painters of his time by the success of his paintings of Barrett and Dr. Nugent. Most remarkable of all are his self-portraits, which more than any other aspect of his painting have earned him a place amongst the progenitors of Romanticism. In these autobiographical images, which span his working career, he gives an intimate and moving insight into his introspective, melancholy temperament. He was at pains to blame his later lack of productivity upon the absence of patronage, rather than on his own depression. "Awmy with the paltry sycophantic cant respecting that *madade imagination* which has been ascribed to so many ingenious men."

... idly wondering why Great Men had not done more, we ought rather give thanks to Almighty God, whose good providence had mercifully enabled them to do so much." However, the sad account of his latter days, in which he fell into squalor and self-neglect, leaves no doubt that he suffered from melancholia as well as persecution mania.

William L. Pressly's monograph, which is the most modern study of Barry to be published, is comprehensively illustrated and contains a full catalogue of his work. In the light of his impressively thorough and accurate survey it is now possible to make an informed judgment of Barry's place amongst late-eighteenth-century British artists, and to assess the relative importance of the different types of art which he practised. Barry himself staked his reputation upon his paintings for the Society of Arts. On these it is relevant to consider the opinion of Benjamin Robert Haydon, whose career bears such an uncanny resemblance to Barry's, both in its pretensions and in its

shortcomings. After seeing the Great Room in the Adelphi in 1842 he wrote in his diary: "There is a grasp of mind there, no where else to be found, as Johnson said, but no colour, no surface, beauty or contrast drawing." These defects can all fairly be laid at Haydon's own door, but there is an uncomfortable element of truth in his assessment of Barry's painting technique. Barry seems to have regarded drawing simply as a stage in the planning of his compositions; his designs have little sensitivity or feeling for graphic quality.

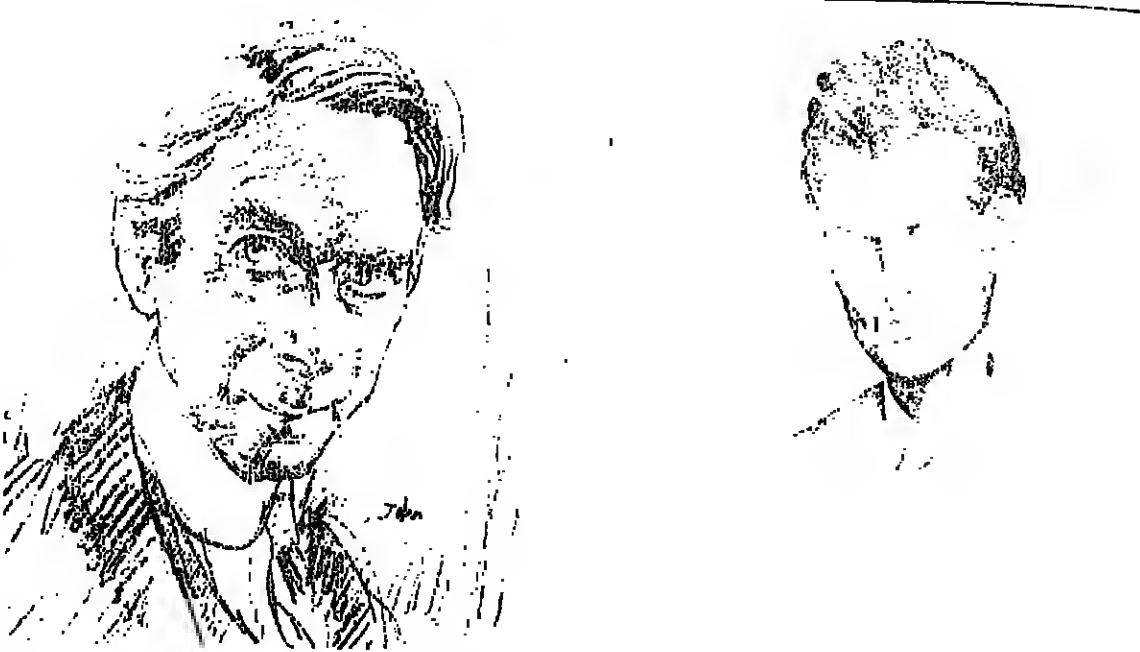
Especially welcome is the attention Pressly devotes to the corpus of prints which, as he rightly remarks, have never received the attention they deserve. They were a vital source of income to Barry whilst he was working at the Adelphi; and since he exhibited so little they were a main vehicle for spreading a knowledge of his compositions amongst a wider public. In them he drew upon his profound knowledge of etching, aquatint and mezzotint to achieve a totally original method of expression, which forms one of the peaks of print-making in the eighteenth century. "These deeply bitten plates, so emphatically printed that they have a surface like a metal rasp, have a rough vigour which transcends the delicate sentimentality of contemporary stipple engraving. They are genuinely original re-creations of compositions he had worked out in other media, and have a graphic quality lacking in his actual drawings."

Barry would not be content with the verdict that he had succeeded primarily as a portrait-painter and print-maker. If this achievement in the field of history painting falling short of the aims he had set himself, the fault must lie partly in his character. The disruptive effects of his aggressive temperament were already so evident in Rome that Burke wrote to caution him: "Your very talents will depart, for want of hope and encouragement, and you will go out of the world fretted, disappointed and ruined." Disregarding this prophetic advice, Barry did little on his return to England to propitiate his potential patrons by his constant coat-trailing, his blunt expressions of opinion, his attacks on the most powerful institutions.

Yet even had he been endowed with a less forthright, more conciliatory personality, it is doubtful whether he could have succeeded at the level he desired. It was not simply his frigid and inhospitable weather that made the British Isles adverse to the grand and heroic style. The climate of taste did not encourage the creation of vast cycles of painting expressing elevating ideals. Barry was an earlier Hugh Selwyn Mauberly.

He strove... out of key with his time to maintain "the sublime" in the old sense. Wrong from the start.

Later decorative schemes, such as those planned for the new Houses of Parliament in the 1840s and the South Kensington Museum in the 1860s were less successful than Barry's work for the Adelphi. Classicist subjects lingered on in the Academy exhibitions of the early nineteenth century, notably amongst the sculptors. But the future lay not with these attempts to recreate the Golden Age, but with the painters of domestic sentiment and, above all, with the artists who were breaking new ground in landscape painting. The real revolutionaries of early-nineteenth-century art were Turner and Constable, and Constable saw this with his customary clarity. His assessment of the Neo-Classical movement, and of those who followed Reynolds in his advocacy of the Grand Manner, was curt and dismissive: "West is only hanging on by the tail of the Shirt of Carlo Maratti and the flag-end of the Roman and Bolognese schools—the last of the Altorum Romorum, and only the shadow of them." He felt nothing but contempt for those who preferred "the shaggy posteriors of a satyr to the moral feelings of landscape" and hereby showed himself a better judge than Barry of the direction in which painting was about to proceed.



On November 11 Christie's will be holding a sale of Modern British and Irish Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (including twenty-two paintings from the studio of the late Augustus John, RA), which may be viewed the four days preceding. Among the various properties to be sold is a red chalk drawing by Augustus John, OM, RA, (above, left) which in the opinion of Michael Holroyd (given to a letter to the author) is a portrait of Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). John was a compaigner for Russell, and in the late 1950s his 'beliefs had brought him in contact with Bertrand Russell whose anti-nuclear movement of mass civil disobedience called the Committee of 100 he joined. 'You may count on me to follow your lead,' he assured Russell on 26 September 1960; '... it is up to all those of us above the idiot line to protest as vigorously as possible'. Michael Holroyd, Augustus John: The Years of Experience (London: 1975), p. 189. Another portrait to be sold (among over 300 items) is a pencil drawing (above, right) of Anthony Asquith (1902-68) done in 1932 by Percy Wyndham Lewis (1892-1957), the Vorticist painter and author of *Tarr*. The Childermas and The Apes of God. 'Puffin' Asquith was the film-director son of H. H. Asquith.

## Ignorantly into war

By Samuel Hynes

ALAN BISHOP (Editor):  
*Chronicle of Youth*  
Vera Brittain's War Diary 1913-1917  
341pp. Gallancz £8.50.  
0 575 02888 2

*Chronicle of Youth* is a selection from Vera Brittain's diary for the years 1913-1917: it recounts her pre-war life in Buxton, her first year at Oxford, her wartime experiences as a nurse, and the death of her fiancé. All of these events will already be familiar to anyone who has read *Testament of Youth*, or has seen the television version of the book, and one may well ask if it is really necessary to publish the diary separately, especially since *Testament* quotes from it so copiously. During Miss Brittain's own lifetime the answer was a firm "No": she twice tried to find a publisher for selections, but without success. Some reviewers of the present volume have come to the same conclusion, that enough Vera Brittain is enough.

But I think they are wrong, and that the two books are in fact very different. The difference is not simply that between raw material and finished product: it might better be described as a difference in mode of narrative. The diary is a young girl's version of her life as a romance, with herself as the romantic heroine (modelled very obviously on Lyndall, in Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, a book that was a kind of sacred text for both Miss Brittain and her soldier-fiancé). It is full of high emotions, and bits of verse, and girlish philosophizing, all put down straight and without irony, as Lyndall herself might have written them. *Testament of Youth*, on the other hand, is history—retrospective, interpretative, and judgmental, and since it is autobiographical history, much concerned to explain and justify, and above all to separate the woman who wrote in 1933 from that earlier self who did the living and the emoting, and was so young and ignorant.

Here is one small example of the difference. In *Testament*, Vera's brother Edward wants to join the army at once in August 1914, but his father forbids it: "having himself escaped immersion in the public-school tradition, which stood for militaristic heroism unimpaired by the damping exercise of reason, he withheld his permission for any kind of military training." Irony, distance, and pacifism are all at work here. The diary reports the episode in this way: "Daddy was quite angry about the letter being sent to the War Office, but E. said that Daddy, not being a public school man or having had any training,

could not possibly understand the impossibility of his remaining in inglorious safety while others, sincerely older than he, were offering their all." Poor Edward, one thinks, believing such rubbish; poor Daddy, despised by his priggish son; poor Vera, not seeing what she saw twenty years later.

The Vera of the diary appears first, in 1913, as a quite ordinary pre-war provincial eighteen-year-old, fond of dancing, clothes, bridge, and flirtation, but also serious, vain about her own intelligence (which is not in fact all that evident), and rather patronizing to ward her family and her town. She is above all ignorant of everything that might have helped her to live through the years to come. "On the way to golf," she writes on March 4, 1913, "I induced Mother to disclose a few points on sexual matters which I thought I ought to know, though the information is always intensely distasteful to me & most depressing—in fact it quite put me off my game!" And sex is not the only area of knowledge in which she is deficient: she seems to have no notion that she might educate herself further at a university, or that she might have a professional career (she writes instead of "literary aspirations"); and she never notices the public world of politics until, on July 25, 1914, she mentions "the European crisis" in a paragraph that begins: "In spite of the showiness of the day, we managed to leave our match against Fallowfield."

It is this ordinary, rather dremy girl who blunders ignorantly into life in the diary of the war years. When war is declared, her first reaction is excitement: "That which has been so long anticipated by some & scoffed at by others has come to pass at last—Armageddon in Europe!" And at once her comments on the causes and progress of the war are stuffed with the rhetoric and the clichés of the popular press: "mailed fists" and "torturing hopes for peace" and "terrible retribution". To this non-information she adds rumours: the Serbs have invaded Austria, Francis Joseph is dead. Reading these pages one realizes, sadly, that she and her generation had no chance of coming closer to the truth than that, and that many of them made their decisions and lost their lives without knowing anything about the realities of the war they were in.

Burdened as she was by propaganda and rumour, it is perhaps not so surprising that Vera learned the lessons of war very slowly. In September 1915 she approved when British soldiers smashed the shop of a German hairdresser in Buxton; they were enemy aliens, she thought, and ought to have been interned long ago. And she stuck to the rhetoric of leader-

writers and Rupert Brooke, even when young men she loved were in the trenches: she writes, in bare "of all but the few great things which we all have to cling to now—honour & love and heroism & sacrifice". Her fiancé, Roland Leighton, knew better than that, and wrote against rhetoric from the trenches:

Let him who thinks that War is a glorious golden thing, who loves to roll forth stirring words of exhortation, invoking Honour and Praise and Valour and Love of country... let him look at a little pile of sodden grey rags that cover half a skull and a shin bone and what might have been his ribs, or at this skeleton lying on its side... and let him realise how grand & glorious a thing it is to have distilled all Youth and Joy and Life into a foetid heap of hideous putrescence. Who is there who has known and seen who can say that Victory is worth the death of even one of these?

Vera Brittain quotes this letter in *Testament*, and adds: "Had there really been a time, I wondered, when I believed that it was?" The diary shows that indeed there had been a time, and that it had lasted surprisingly long—she is still quoting Rupert Brooke on the last page, the poem about leaving a white unbroken glory. She had learned some things, but she was still in her way ignorant, ordinary, and of her time. The wisdom, such as it was, came later.

But that doesn't matter, for what is valuable in the diary has almost nothing to do with Vera Brittain's individual merit, or her development as a thinking person, but rather with her representativeness, as a young girl living through the moral confusion and the suffering of the First World War, one day at a time. Along the way she offers interesting materials for a social history of her world—pre-war middle-class Buxton, Somerville in 1914, nursing in Camberwell, the customs of a war-time courtship (one kiss after they had agreed to be engaged). But at the centre is the endless daily wretchedness of a young woman in love with a man who might die tomorrow, who might even have died yesterday, for a cause that she confusedly still believed in and that he didn't (and who did die pointlessly and without glory, mending barbed wire on a moonlit night at the end of 1915).

Vera Brittain thought that 1939, "with its intense, life-and-death preoccupation with war and peace", might be an appropriate time to publish her diary. Today that preoccupation seems no less intense, and so the time must be equally appropriate—though one can't help adding gloomily that if literature were really an effective instrument against war the world would be at peace by now.

L. W. SUMNER:  
*Abortion and Moral Theory*  
240pp. Princeton University Press.  
£11 (paperback), £31.  
0 691 07362 0

Though one still hears jokes about moral philosophers who are expert in the meaning of "ought" but not at all interested in discussions about what we ought to do, such jokes are at last on the decline. It is now quite widely known that philosophers of the English-speaking world write and teach about a wide range of moral problems, including abortion, euthanasia, the use of animals for food and experimentation, racism, sexism, reverse discrimination, the obligations of the rich to the poor, and so on.

What is not so well-known is precisely how moral philosophers contribute to these problems, or—more fundamentally—whether their contributions are achieving anything. After all, one of the reasons those old jokes once were apt is that for many years moral philosophers took it for granted that they could not achieve anything by directing their attention to actual moral problems.

The role of the philosopher is not, they used to say, the role of the preacher; and they would deny that there is any such thing as expertise in the field of morality. Perhaps now, after ten years' work by moral philosophers on moral problems, it is time to single out one of the topics on which moral philosophers have worked, and ask for evidence that some progress has been made.

If we are seeking a topic to use as an example for this kind of investigation, the issue of abortion stands out as an obvious choice. It is a controversial public issue, hotly debated among the general community, because what we as a community decide about abortion really does matter to—depending on which way you look at it—thousands of unborn children who will be murdered if we continue with our present policies, or thousands of pregnant women who will be denied the freedom to control their own bodies, if we change those policies.

There is another reason why the abortion issue has interested philosophers. It is one in which the ratio of facts in dispute to values in dispute is extremely low. By this I mean that there are relatively few relevant facts about which pro-abortionists and anti-abortionists disagree, and hence relatively more of their disagreement depends on the different values they hold. In this respect the issue of abortion differs significantly from, say, the issue of nuclear power, where both those in favour of nuclear power and those against it agree on the basic values of avoiding radio-active leaks and preventing terrorists from obtaining nuclear fuel to make bombs with, but disagree on the feasibility of a safe nuclear power industry. (It might be said that the abortion debate is really a dispute over a fact, the issue of fact being whether the fetus is human. I shall soon make it clear why this is a mistake.)

Moral philosophers are not, and obviously cannot be, expert in all the factual questions raised by issues as diverse as nuclear power, animal experimentation, world hunger, and genetic engineering. If they have any special skills, it must be in the details of moral argument. It is because the abortion dispute is so largely a matter of moral, rather than factual, argument that it provides philosophers with an opportunity to show what they can do. The publication of *Abortion and Moral Theory* by L. W. Sumner provides a suitable occasion for an assessment of the achievements of philosophers in this area, for the book is perhaps the most thorough and clearly set out discussion to date of the major philosophical questions raised by abortion.

In the past ten years the philosophical literature on abortion has become extensive. Articles have appeared in all the leading journals. One journal, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, has brought together the articles published in its pages into a collection entitled *The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion*. There are other anthologies too, most notably *The Problem of Abortion*, edited by Joel Feinberg, and *Abortion: Pro and Con*, edited by Robert Perkins. Books written by a single author have been less common, but Dan Callahan's *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality*, published in 1970, was an influential early work, especially on the social policy issues.

Though I write as a philosopher myself, and for that reason may be in no position to make a detached assessment, some of these writings have contributed considerably to a clarification of the issues involved. By questioning widely accepted assumptions they have moved the whole question to a different plane. I am prepared to go even further: the philosophical debate has now reached the point at which some widely held views about abortion can be shown to be, by the standards of reasoned argument, untenable.

In the mass media, the crux of the abortion debate is most commonly presented as the question: "When does human life begin?" The chief single merit of the philosophical literature on abortion is that it has shown that this is *not* the question to ask. As Michael Tooley argued in his article "Abortion and Infanticide" (included, in slightly different versions, in both *The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion* and *The Problem of Abortion*) being human—if by this is meant merely being a member of the species *homo sapiens*—cannot be morally decisive. Having a right to life cannot depend on membership of a certain species. It must depend on some morally relevant characteristics possessed by the being. Species is not a morally relevant characteristic, any more than race or sex. Hence the conservative argument that "human life begins at conception; so abortion is murder" may be based on a premise that is technically true, but the premise fails to support the conclusion. We do not have to admit that every taking of an innocent human life is murder. A life that is human in a genetic sense may still lack the characteristics that make it wrong to take the lives of those who are "human" in a much fuller sense.

Here the question has to be asked: what then is the characteristic that makes it wrong to take a human life? Tooley's answer was bold: self-consciousness, in the sense of the ability to appreciate that one is a living being, with a possible future. Only a being with this ability can desire to continue living, and only one being with such a desire, Tooley claimed, can have a serious right to life.

Every liberal view on abortion must somehow meet the conservative challenge to point to a morally significant difference between the eight-month-old fetus and the newborn baby. Tooley responds to this challenge by agreeing that there is no crucial difference, and nonetheless rejecting the implication of a new being with moral standing, but does

standards which Plato regarded as necessary for the possibility of any form of moral life or justice either in the state or the individual. The book continues with chapters on "The Controversy of Convention or Nature as the Basis of the State", "The Inadequacy of Convention as a Basis for Society", "The Education of the Rulers in the Republic" (potential Guardians should display the qualities which would make them "swift, strong, spirited and philosophical"), "The Justice of the State and the Justice of the Individual", "Law in the Republic, Politics and Laws", "The States of the Republic and Laws" and "Plato's Political Heritage".

M.F.

# Conception and misconception

By Peter Singer

that abortion is as wrong as infanticide. Instead Tooley draws the conclusion that, with some qualifications, infanticide is as permissible as abortion.

In *Abortion and Moral Theory* Sumner takes over much of the ground broken by Tooley, but attempts to show that this ground can be held without accepting Tooley's toleration of infanticide. This Sumner pre-emptively thought that Tooley did, the case against taking the mere species membership of the fetus as morally significant. He agrees that what is needed is a characteristic that can clearly be seen to be morally relevant—a "criterion of moral standing", as he calls it. He also agrees with both Tooley and the conservatives that birth will not do as a morally significant dividing line. Yet he is dissatisfied by Tooley's arguments for self-consciousness as the characteristic that makes the difference.

Sumner's alternative criterion is sentience, or the capacity for feeling. This means that to count, morally, a being must at least be capable of experiencing pain or pleasure. Hence not only humans, but also many animals, have no moral standing. Sumner believes that the transmission of pain requires a central nervous system, and so he denies moral standing to invertebrate animals; this doubtless content is made very briefly, and without the supporting argument it would need, but given the topic of his book the omission is understandable.

Where does this leave the fetus? As soon as we ask this question, we realize that it is simplistic to talk about "the fetus" as if there were a single kind of being from the moment of conception to the moment of birth. In the opening chapters of his book Sumner gives a critical exposition of the abortion debate, an exposition which leads him to the conclusion that both the liberal view and the conservative view are too simple. Their flaw lies precisely in their uniform view of the fetus. We all know that the fertilized egg develops by innumerable gradual stages from a single cell to something that is in effect a human infant, though still inside the womb. Why then, Sumner asks, do both the liberal and the conservative insist that the morality of abortion remains unchanged through all these stages? Would not a reasonable view of abortion be sensitive to the dramatic changes in the nature of the developing form of life?

Sumner's own position falls between the two standard views. In the case of a becoming sentient, Sumner agrees with the liberal that the fetus has no moral standing, and so abortion is permissible. After a brief discussion of the physiological evidence—again perhaps too brief, and this time with less excuse, given the central importance of such evidence in his view—Sumner concludes that the fetus is not sentient until sometime in the second trimester of pregnancy. Thus abortion up until about 14 weeks is, Sumner says, morally indistinguishable from contraception. It prevents the emergence of a new being with moral standing, but does

no wrong to any existing being with a right to life.

A late abortion, on Sumner's view, must be judged differently. It does violate the right to life of a being with moral standing. This does not mean that it is always wrong. The fact that the being is parasitic upon the pregnant woman makes abortion easier to justify than infanticide; still, it takes a serious reason, for example a threat to the woman's physical or mental health, to justify it. Sumner recommends a case-by-case approach as the only way to decide when a reason is serious enough to justify a late abortion.

Sumner presents his view not only as a middle way that avoids the crude simplifications of the alternative positions, but also as a view that can be derived from a sound ethical theory. His theory is a form of utilitarianism, and he spends the last two chapters of his book explaining why Sumner's equation of contraception and abortion leads us to think about early abortion in the same light. But should a utilitarian take this view of contraception? Or should he, aiming to maximize the total happiness, think it desirable to produce as many beings as possible, as long as they can be happy without detracting more from the happiness of others than the total sum of their own happiness? To the ordinary reader aware of the population problems our planet faces, this question will reveal the tiresomely academic side of applied moral philosophy; but it cannot be ignored by philosophers familiar with the baffling questions raised by asking whether we should consider the happiness of those possible future beings we could, if we so chose, bring into existence. I doubt that this latter section of Sumner's audience will be content with his discussion of these questions.

All the same, Sumner's book is not going to be the last word on abortion; no one familiar with this debate, or with philosophy for that matter, would expect it to be. Sumner leaves some important questions

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# Trapped on history's wheel

By Blair Worden

PAULINE GREGG:  
King Charles I  
449pp. Dent. £12.50,  
0 460 04437 0

One is surprised to find a biography of Charles I done at all. Pauline Gregg has done it well. At every stage she has faced large and complex problems of organization and interpretation. Charles's youthful development has to be gleaned from discrete and grudging evidence. The 1620s – the years when he reached adulthood, assumed the crown and quarrelled with his early parliament – are in historiographical disarray. In the 1630s, the decade of personal rule, the King's decorous but dull court became isolated from the nobles and intellectuals who might have written revealingly about it. The intricate chronology of the 1640s, as many historians have discovered, is a biographer's graveyard. Charles's behaviour from the meeting of the Short Parliament in 1640 to his execution in 1649 deserves a book to itself. Miss Gregg is nothing daunted. Her reading is wide; her prose is clear; her narrative, although often derivative, is sound and compelling. If there are understandable signs of tiredness towards the end, her head remains above the water. Specialists will find much with which to quibble, but none of them has tried to write the long and substantial account of Charles's life and reign which has long been wanting. Miss Gregg has written it.

Much about Charles will always be unknowable. Much will always be unattractive. Miss Gregg does not shirk his weaknesses: his aloofness; his capacity for imperiousness and for vindictiveness; his untrustworthi-

ness in negotiation (although this was merely a strategic error, not a sin: his leading parliamentary opponents were at least as unscrupulous as he was, and much cleverer); his ostentatious loyalty to politicians who carried hatred by their loyalty to him. Yet Charles, who in the service of neat explanation has often been taken for a knave or a fool, was neither. Miss Gregg traces with shrewd perception the formation of a personality which was flawed from birth and which was damaged by a sickly, backward childhood, but which came to acquire a substantial measure of grace and sympathy. In his early years he was overshadowed by his elder brother Henry and his elder sister Elizabeth, those pin-ups of European Protestantism to whose cause he was to devote himself so rashly in the 1620s. Later, in his delayed adolescence, he was overshadowed by the Duke of Buckingham. After Buckingham's death, however, he began to discover his own strength.

The Charles of the personal rule, familiar to us as a remote aesthete, appears here instead as an energetic ruler who mastered the machinery of government (even if he did too little to reform it). Miss Gregg presents him as a promoter of economic and social reforms, an advocate of national self-sufficiency, and a consistent defender of the underprivileged. Her case, not entirely novel one, might have been made more fully, but it is certainly true that many of the ambitious Cromwellian policies of the 1650s can be seen in embryo in the 1630s. Until the Scottish war, the personal rule was the happiest and most successful period of Charles's life. Even so, the peaceful diplomacy on which non-parliamentary government depended came unnaturally to him. He never lost his youthful and restless appetite for action and adventure. The Civil

War, for all its tribulations, offered a welcome release. In arms he displayed courage and comradeship. By the time of Charles's captivity, which she memorably describes, Miss Gregg has established grounds for a dignified pathos.

The pathos is legitimate, but a price is paid for it. By the end of this biography Charles has become a victim, trapped on the wheel of history, vindictive for a helpless right, with "no aptitude for presiding over the birth of a new society". Yet the bulk of the book suggests what the half-hearted determinism of its concluding paragraphs appears to deny: that under monarchies the fates of nations are as well as the relations between them are dependent on the personalities and the private lives of monarchs. That is the point of writing biographies of them. Contemporaries did not think Charles doomed to failure, and I doubt whether many historians now do so either. It is his methods, not his policies, that seem unworkable. (At least, that is so in England. It may not be so in Scotland and Ireland, the counties which brought his ruin, and on which Miss Gregg is not strong.) If the future seemed to belong anywhere in the earlier seventeenth century it was not to the "parliamentary sovereignty" and to the "Whig supremacy" to which Miss Gregg tentatively looks forward, but to European absolutism.

Miss Gregg's hesitation at this point exposes the understandable but regrettable boundaries of her ambition, and prompts the reservations which must accompany the praise her book deserves. Wide as her curiosity is, it does not consistently extend to the facts of political power or to the workings of political institutions. Excellent when she can perceive the King's actions as the public projections of private feelings, she does not always grasp the competition of interest groups with which he had to contend. The last few years have produced some uncommonly interesting and controversial work, principally by Conrad Russell and by his followers and critics, on the poli-

tical groupings and arguments of the 1620s and 1630s. Most of this literature appears in Miss Gregg's enormous (and erratic) bibliography, but she does not seem to have absorbed much of it. Not all of it is readily digestible, and some of it has no doubt appeared inconveniently late in the day. Even so, a biographer with a keen nose for politics would have welcomed the opportunity presented by recent writing for a major reassessment of the King's role.

The book's treatment of religion shows the inevitable limitations as well as the virtues of a biography whose author finds the King more interesting than the kingdom. As usual Miss Gregg is good on Charles's inner sentiments. She understands that he disliked bigots, whether papist or puritan, and had no wish to pry into men's doctrinal sympathies. She is perceptive about his private relationship with Archbishop Laud, for whom he felt respect but not warmth. But no one could understand from this book the depth of insecurity and anger which Charles's ecclesiastical policies aroused. Miss Gregg brings out the King's Erastianism and his belief that as the church can never flourish without the protection of the Crown, so the dependency of the Church upon the Crown is the chief support of the royal authority. Yet Charles brought church and crown down together. The churchmen he promoted, and the power he gave them, threatened the balance between church and state which had been maintained since 1559. So long as the royal supremacy was presented as a counterweight to papal pretensions abroad and to clerical pretensions at home, it gave the monarchy vital strength and support. Charles's politically disastrous patronage of Arminian clericalism is a puzzle which this book does nothing to resolve.

If Charles's ecclesiastical aims remain elusive, so does his political creed. Divine right was a belief which he "learned from his father" and which "he carried with him to his dying day, so implicitly that he never felt the need to enunciate it in

so many words". As far as it goes, that is fair enough. Charles was never an intellectual as his father had been, and his often gratuitous assertions of his prerogative may be explicable more by inherited assumptions and by a psychological struggle for self-conviction than by any firm grasp of political theory. Yet Charles had ample opportunity, and in his dealings with his parliamentaries, necessarily, to reflect on the scope and the purpose of monarchical power. I wish Miss Gregg had expanded her tantalizing references to Charles's annotations of books and manuscripts. She believes the King to have been influenced by some collected aphorisms of Guicciardini; and while she seems to me to strain the evidence, Charles's relationship to the "public history" which developed in his lifetime might well repay reflection. So, I suspect, might the interest he displayed in the 1640s in the histories by Divila and d'Aubigné of the French Wars of Religion. It seems possible that if Charles had a model in the last years of his life it was not his father, who had at best earned mixed feelings from him, but his father-in-law, Henri IV, who out of civil war had restored peace and erected absolutism.

When an author has worked as hard as Miss Gregg, it is a pity to have to grumble about the system of references which she and her publisher have adopted. It is maddeningly difficult, and at times impossible, to locate her sources. That is not a purely pedantic complaint, for in her account of Charles's feelings and judgments the dividing line between intelligent speculation and demonstrable assertion is frequently invisible. The space occupied by her scholarly apparatus could have been used more informatively and more reassuringly.

So this is not an ideal biography of Charles I. But it is much the best we have (if we exclude C. V. Wedgwood's trilogy, which is both something more and something less than a biography). If it is widely read it will be widely enjoyed.

## Caroline weathercock

By Kevin Sharpe

ROY E. SCHREIBER:  
The Political Career of Sir Robert Naunton 1589-1635

190pp. Royal Historical Society/Swift Books. £15.40,  
0 901050 79 2

Although Sir Robert Naunton held two important offices – that of Secretary of State from 1618 to 1621, and Master of the Court of Wards from 1624 to 1635 – he was not noted, as a man of business, for anything other than competence. He instigated no administrative revolution, nor was he involved in any major scandal. Even in the building of his personal fortune, Naunton was not one of the more conspicuous beneficiaries of a career at court and in office. Yet Roy E. Schreiber's unravelling of his career has proved more than worthwhile. For though Naunton, indeed because Naunton, was not a figure of greater forcefulness and renown, we may learn from his career much about the early Stuart political world and the place of King James I in it.

Naunton was a weathercock of the changing winds of faction. He obtained the secretaryship in 1618 thanks to the patronage of Villiers, to whom he was related, and to the need for a secretary of known anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish inclinations, as a counterweight to the senior secretary Sir Thomas Lake. Dealing with the Venetian, Dutch and Protestant German ambassadors, Naunton endeavoured to build a

coalition to offset the power of the Habsburgs. He rose to his greatest influence in 1621 as a leading organizer of the anti-Spanish groups at court, promoting a parliament and persuading the King to appoint a council of war as preparations for conflict. He was suspended from office the same year, a gesture to the Spanish envoy Gondomar, when James I declared openly his commitment to a Spanish match. A change of foreign policy in 1624 saw Naunton rescued from disgrace and retirement and promoted to the Mastership of the Court of Wards, but his relationship with the new king, Charles I (not least on account of their religious differences), was never close. The death of Buckingham and the re-establishment of peace with Spain after 1629 affectively ended his career.

It was a career which, as Schreiber well shows, illustrates the underestimated political skills of James I. James, it would seem, quite consciously balanced and divided his administration, especially the conduct of foreign affairs. Because each secretary dealt with ambassadors from countries with which he had some sympathy, a communication was established which enabled intelligence to be obtained and (sometimes false) information to be conveyed without suspicion. The King alone knew the complete picture. So, in 1621, Naunton was no much in evidence because James wanted the Habsburgs to think that he was moving away from them. He was suspended because the anti-Spanish programme was not the King's main policy but a device to force Spain's hand. "When it failed to produce the desired results, it was abandoned and Sir Robert with it." Through

Schreiber's account we see more clearly than before the relationship of office and factional change to the subtle flexibility of James's conduct of policy.

After 1621, however, the narrative becomes sketchy and the analysis less satisfactory. The dilemma facing Naunton as an MP, courted by the anti-Spanish interest and yet still hopeful of restoration to royal favour, is not worked out. His parliamentary career from 1621 to 1628 requires a fuller treatment than is given here and needs to be integrated with his career at court if we are properly to understand Naunton as a politician or early Stuart factional alignments in general. Statements about the nature of court politics in 1629 are simplistic and at times incorrect. The Caroline court in the 1630s was by no means the exclusive Arminian enclave depicted here. Some of these problems arise from what appears to be a neglect of important recent studies. For in a work so thoroughly based on primary sources it is surprising how little reference is made to, and how little use is made of, the findings of scholars of Raleigh, Russell and Zaller for instance, who have so valuably illuminated the 1620s. Because Naunton's late career is briefly treated, he was unfortunately never appreciate the work for which he is best known, the *Fragmenta Regalia*, nor fully understand how that work (evidently written in the 1630s) reflects his experience.

But, at its best, Schreiber's Naunton demonstrates how much can be learned about the little-studied early Stuart court from the career of one man. It is a salutary reminder that the politicians of second rank should not be neglected.

# Making a meal of it

By Harold Beaver

MICHAEL BARRY GOODMAN:  
Contemporary Literary Censorship  
The Case History of Burroughs's  
*Naked Lunch*  
330pp. Methuen, New Jersey:  
Scribner Press.  
0 8108 1398 X

"Gug, Gug. It tastes disgusting", was this journal's verdict on William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*. That was in November 1963 and the review elicited ten weeks of correspondence under the title "Ugh". "Ugh or not-ugh" remained the question here almost a year after American publication. But in America charges and counter-charges had been flying for at least six years. In the decade from 1957 to 1966 *Naked Lunch* was embroiled in censorship actions at the academic, postal, customs, state and federal levels. Its role was entangled and decisive. After the Massachusetts Supreme Court majority verdict in favour of *Naked Lunch* in July 1966 there was to be no more literary censorship, based on obscenity, in the United States.

What was at stake was the right of free expression, guaranteed by the First Amendment. But was obscenity protected by the First Amendment? At least three questions were involved: the nature of the licence (what was obscenity?); the nature of the product (what exactly was literature?); and the nature of society (what, by mid-century, was "mainstream"?). The key battles were fought around James Joyce's *Ulysses*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, with one intrusion from the eighteenth century: John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, commonly known as "Fanny Hill". Since then Charles Rembar has studied the "Lady Chatterley" hearing in *The End of Obscenity* (1968). E. R. Hutchinson explored the Miller affair in *Tropic of Cancer on Trial* (1968). Now Michael Barry Goodman has supplied a similar case history for *Naked Lunch*. Prose usually proved a riskier business than verse. Walt Whitman escaped legal charges. So too did Allen Ginsberg, despite the brickbats thrown at him. *Naked Lunch*, however, was presented as prose; it was published as fiction; it linked homosexuality and cannibalism, these two residual and all-powerful taboos of our society. So *Naked Lunch* became the absolute test case.

In 1957 the manuscript had been offered by Ginsberg to Maurice Girodias of the Olympia Press and been rejected. "Listen", Girodias said, "the whole thing has to be reshaped": the ends of the pages were all eaten away; the prose was transformed into verse, edited "by the rats or something". But a year later the *Chicago Review* (a quarterly owned by the University of Chicago and run by students) printed "Chap-

ter 2 of *Naked Lunch*". An academic now blew up and future extracts were suppressed. So the editor arranged for an independent magazine, *Big Table*, to print the entire contents of the (Winter 1959) *Chicago Review*. "Ten Episodes from *Naked Lunch*" had pride of place. At this point the United States Post Office stepped in under the so-called "Comstock Act", originally devised to prevent the mailing of literature dealing with abortion. Formal charges were brought against *Big Table*. This bonus of free publicity must have persuaded Girodias to reconsider his rejection of *Naked Lunch*. For a French edition (entitled *The Naked Lunch*) was available outside the United States by late July 1959.

The Post Office case rested on the four-letter, or Anglo-Saxon, words. There were plenty of them in fifty-seven pages of text. No notice was taken that caricatures might be involved, nor of Burroughs's claim to be a "recording instrument" (trained, incidentally, as an anthropologist at Harvard). *Big Table*'s editor put up on intelligent defence, citing Poe and Jarry as precursors and calling Burroughs the most powerful American satirist since Nathaniel West. Eventually he went off beam by placing *Naked Lunch* in the tradition of a play called *Oedipus Rex* by Socrates and Hamlet's murder of his brother. The critical point, though, was clear enough: that Burroughs was a social commentator in a satirical tradition of incest, patricide and fratricide.

As *Big Table*'s attorney remarked after the close of proceedings: "The Post Office would do well to remember that its job is to deliver the mail, and that Americans are free to decide what they will read." That was, picked up in New York and the literary (Barzun, Burke, Clardi, Kenner, Trilling) leap into the fray. For them the controversy turned more on the literary and philosophical attitudes of the Beat Generation. Jack Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight" had appeared in the same issue; Kerouac they found plain dull. "It is impossible to conceive how any average man can go on reading 'the stuff', John Clardi wrote. "let alone be corrupted by it." In Burroughs, true, it was not dullness that was at issue. As Hugh Kenner put it, veering anxiously between the impersonal and the personal: "One arises from its perusal impressed by the author's virtuosity, and I believe enlightened by what has been set before me, but certainly tempted to try for oneself the experience described."

Testimony to the value of Burroughs's work as a deterrent to drug-taking had already been heard. The age-old insistence on the identity of aesthetic and pragmatic values, however, could not so easily be swept aside. *Big Table* was found "nonmailable". *Naked Lunch* joined *Ulysses*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and run by students) printed "Chap-

ter 2 of *Naked Lunch*". An academic now blew up and future extracts were suppressed. So the editor arranged for an independent magazine, *Big Table*, to print the entire contents of the (Winter 1959) *Chicago Review*. "Ten Episodes from *Naked Lunch*" had pride of place. At this point the United States Post Office stepped in under the so-called "Comstock Act", originally devised to prevent the mailing of literature dealing with abortion. Formal charges were brought against *Big Table*. This bonus of free publicity must have persuaded Girodias to reconsider his rejection of *Naked Lunch*. For a French edition (entitled *The Naked Lunch*) was available outside the United States by late July 1959.

The matter might have rested. But copies of the Olympia Press edition were now filtering into America. Obscene material was liable under the Tariff Act of 1930. Despite the removal of the postal ban, Customs continued to consider *Naked Lunch* contraband. Editorial copies were seized en route from Paris to Grove Press which was angling, after the successful Illinois appeal, for rights to an American edition. *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), published by Grove Press in the summer of 1961, had rapidly climbed to number six on the bestseller list. A Writers' Conference, part of the Edinburgh Festival of 1962, generated enough publicity to consolidate plans for an American *Naked Lunch*; it was now the most celebrated book that almost no one in England or America had read. Ginsberg, by his dedication of *Howl* (1956), had first advertised that "endless novel which will drive everybody mad". Mailer, in *Advertisements for Myself* (1959), had compared Burroughs to Jean Genet. Mary McCarthy, at the Edinburgh Conference, linked *Naked Lunch* with *Lolita*, defending it as "some kind of study of free totalitarianism" (whatever that may mean). Burroughs himself was in attendance, announcing his current concerns. So Grove Press pushed ahead. In November 1962 the first American edition was issued (with testimonials from John Clardi, Jack Kerouac, Robert Lowell, Norman Mailer and Terry Southern) to a very mixed reception of resounding praise and contempt. It sold over 14,000 copies by March 1963.

"Banned in Boston" is a long-standing national joke; and, sure

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Placas, or yin and yang, the fish in Mrs Tanaki's porch-side pool – flushed by its faucet waterfall – were corpulent, a pinky beige,

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fall like branches of her weeping willow. A cemetery two gardens away was packed with planks: enormous, written-on

tongue-depressors. But what did they say? Namas? Prayers? The carp in their shallow basin might have known once, than forgotten.

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enough, the case against *Naked Lunch* erupted, in January 1963, in Boston. A bookseller was arrested for selling a copy. Grove Press, instead of defending the bookseller against criminal charges, decided to press for an *in rem* procedure: that is, to place the book itself on trial. The trial before a Massachusetts Superior Court Judge was eventually set for January 1965. Attorney for the defence waived the right of trial by jury. His case rested on three points, best articulated by Justice Brennan of the United States Supreme Court in 1966:

... it must be established that (a) the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex; (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters; and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value.

Terry Southern's *Candy* was submitted as evidence of "contemporary community standards", together with the relevant page of the *New York Times Book Review* which displayed its bestseller listing over thirty-three weeks.

This was just the prologue to high farce. Spectators, who had carried in copies of *Naked Lunch* under their arms, read along with witnesses passages referred to in their testimony. The book had already achieved the status of a cult. Judge Hudson was to have difficulties in following some of the more bizarre literary effects. Opening for the defence, Edward deGrazia observed that *Naked Lunch* was socially important because it portrayed "one of the country's newest kinds of Hell". Startled, the Judge asked, "Newest kinds of what?" "Hell", deGrazia replied, "Heroin addiction." In the same spirit John Clard, comparing *Naked Lunch* to the *Divine Comedy*, argued:

I think the point is that when Dante dipped the sins in excrement, he did not call it excrement. When you are dealing with de-

praved subject matter you must coarsen the language; you must take the rough rasp to the finish in order to indicate its course. I don't see how a man can sin in following the Master in this.

Thomas H. Jackson agreed, citing the military gruffer in the *Inferno* who makes "a trumpet of his aims". At this, Judge Hudson interrupted the professor to ask if the *Inferno* contained any "prurient language". This was ducked with an astute reference to the cannibalistic (though not exactly homosexual) repast of the Ugolino canto. Norman N. Holland was another member of this strange mafia who startled the judge. Building on what Clard had observed, he testified that

*Naked Lunch* is a religious novel about original sin. I was struck by what Mr Clard mentioned, St Augustine. If St Augustine were writing today he might well write something like *Naked Lunch*. "What was that again, please? What did you say?" asked the Judge. Still puzzled, he reverted to the professor's statement later. Would he clarify his remarks that *Naked Lunch* was the sort of book St Augustine would have written were he alive? As a confession, it appeared, leading to a kind of repentance. Did he mean, asked the Judge, that the saint would have referred to the immaculate Conception the way Burroughs had done. "I doubt it", Holland replied.

Norman Mailer took a more pugnacious line. He could go into a gym, he explained, see a young kid fighting, and tell in a minute how far that kid would go. Anyone with long experience could identify a winner, "just like a Judge may form an opinion on the reliability of a witness on the basis of ten, twenty, thirty years experience in law courts". Judge Hudson not to be outdone, confided that he had read none of Mailer's books, but asked if his works involved "sex in the naked sense". To which the author of *An American Dream* (1965) replied: "I write in a far chaster tradition."

All these were half-truths, of course. *Naked Lunch* is bifocal, both sardonic and gleeful. It is a parody of homosexuality since it equates the hypocritical need with a grotesque misuse of the penis. The salinity and self-loathing are linked, as prostitution and addiction are linked. Both narcotics and homosexuality are additive. Burroughs felt at this point of his career, and destructive of human potentiality. So the trial, however decorously conducted, was a farce: the book is clearly both literary (in its abrasive, colloquial, satirical use of language) and obscene. When asked whether he had not found the antisemitism of the "County Clerk" offensive, Ginsberg exploded:

No, Burroughs is defending the Jews here. Don't you realize he is making a parody of the monstrous speech and thought processes of a red-necked Southern, hate-filled type, who hates everybody. Jews, Negroes, Northerners. Burroughs is taking a very moral position, like defending the good here, I think.

As he himself had written:

A naked lunch is natural to us, we eat really sandwiches. But allegories are so much lettuce. Don't hide the madness.

The Judge's problem, however, was that this hallucinatory text did not seem to be accounted for wholly by a circularity of meaning (as in *Finnegans Wake*) or by the discontinuities of life itself. "Frankly", he admitted, "what I am concerned about is whether or not the insertion of hard-core pornography at any place in a description of an addict's hallucinations becomes seriously and grossly offensive." *Naked Lunch*, Ginsberg argued, like a newspaper had no plot. But the Judge's concern was "whether or not under the guise of portraying the hallucinations of a drug addict, the author has ingeniously satisfied his own whim or fancy, and inserted in this book hard-core pornography." In several places, he explained, "I just fail to see the association between what appears to me to be a grossly vulgar and obscene phrase with the thought expressed in the preceding paragraph or the paragraph which follows."

A similar case against *Naked Lunch*, that came up in Los Angeles, had been rapidly dismissed. But in Houston Judge Hudson ruled that *Naked Lunch* was "obscene, indecent, and impure... and taken as a whole is predominantly prurient, hard-core pornography, and utterly without redeeming social importance." He rejected the claim that the book had scientific value as a detailed account of an addict's delirium, since in that case the First Amendment would protect "trash" by any "mentally sick" author. He stressed the garbage-like nature of the text, concluding that Burroughs had "first collected the foulest and vilest phrases describing unnatural sexual experiences, and tossed them indiscriminately...". Two days later the defence attorney lodged an appeal with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

Meanwhile three other cases involving obscenity laws were before the United States Supreme Court. The Massachusetts Court waited on Washington. In March 1966 the conviction of the New York publisher, Ralph Ginzburg, for "pandering" (ur soliciting) erotic interest was upheld. He had, among other things, attempted to procure mailing privileges from the postmasters of Intercoastal and Blue Ball, Pennsylvania, though the two towns could not begin to handle the expected volume of mail. So Middlesex, New Jersey, had eventually been landed with the job. The conviction of a New York bookseller for commissioning pamphlets with titles like *Screnning Flesh* and *Mistress of Leather* was also upheld. In the case of "Fanny Hill" the majority opinion held that each of the three criteria (prurient interest / patent offensiveness / social value) needed to be independently applied. One criterion could not be cancelled by another. As long as a book had value, in other words, it was owed the full protection of the First Amendment. So "Fanny Hill" could be released for sale.

This cleared the way for the Massachusetts Supreme Court judgment with two justices dissenting on July 7, 1966: *Naked Lunch*, it was felt, might "appeal to the prurient interest" and was "grossly offensive" but its worth had been established both by the literary reviews and the court testimonies so that *Naked Lunch* could not be considered "utterly without redeeming social value". The ban on *Naked Lunch*, decreed by the lower court, was reversed with the proviso that the book was not to be exploited in the Commonwealth "for the sake of its possible prurient appeal". (Grove Press countered that ominous possibility by incorporating the entire majority verdict into the introduction of their paperback version.)

With that the tide had turned. An American era had closed, marked by the coarse *celebrity of Ulysses*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tropic of Cancer* and *Naked Lunch*. Whether they belong in each other's company, whether they are in any sense paradigmatic, is not now the question. Judicially they will be remembered as a quartet. With the 1970s a new era opened, marked no longer by literary trials but the cases of magazines like *Hustler*, of books like *Man-Woman Sex Orgies* (illustrated), and of actors in films such as *Deep Throat*. The United States Post Office and United States Customs have long ago changed their ways. Michael Barry Goodman proves a clear-headed and sure-footed guide through these stormy waters. There is some evidence, though slight, of wrong transcription. His is a painstaking review. What might have been a tedious unbinding of files unfolds into a drama of literature versus law, bustling with attendant characters and lacks in often farcical confrontation.

As part of their series, "Critical Essays on American Literature", the Boston publishers G. K. Hall have recently issued *Critical Essays on Theodore Dreiser* (343pp. 0 8161 8257 4). The editor, Donald Pizer, has assembled reviews and essays by such writers as H. L. Mencken, Lionel Trilling and Alfred Kazin on various aspects of Dreiser's work, and these are complemented by groups of essays that consider each of the novels in detail.



For his 1931 monograph *Clothes: an Essay upon the Nature and Significance of the Natural and Artificial Integuments worn by Men and Women* Eric Gill provided as illustration ten wood-engravings. Gill's own copy of the work forms part of a sole of books, manuscripts, prints and drawings by Eric Gill, David Jones and their associates to be held by Sotheby's at their New Bond Street premises on 9th November, and the illustration above is taken from the catalogue.

## Information, please

**Pre-1500 private letters in English:** I should be grateful for any information about such material, especially any letters which may not have been already calendared or otherwise noticed in print for the revision of Wells's *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*.

Britton J. Harwood, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, 43056.

**John Clare:** Information sought of any Clare manuscripts, fragments of manuscripts, or books containing his initials or his notes in private collections or in smaller libraries; for the Oxford English Texts edition of the poetry of John Clare.

Eric H. Robinson, c/o Oxford University Press, Academic Division, Oxford OX2 6DP.

**Melanie Klein** (1882-1960), psychoanalyst: letters, reminiscences, etc. sought, especially for the period she spent in Budapest and Berlin; for a biography.

Phyllis Grosskurth, 9 Kynance Mews, London SW7.

**St John Barbotrol and Evelyn, Lady Barbotrol** (Evelyn Rothwell): any memorias, anecdotes, correspondence or memorabilia for an authorized memoir of the subjects' lives together.

Harold Atkins, Peter Cotes, c/o Robson Books, 5/6 Clipstone Street, London W1.

**Mrs Patrick Campbell** (actress, 1865-1940): letters, reminiscences sought for biography.

Margot Paters, 4 Alma Square, London NW8.

**Thomas Dixon** of Sunderland (1831-80): whereabouts of his correspondence with Ruskin, the Rossetis, William Bell Scott *et al*, apart from those letters held in Tyne and Wear Archives; for a biographical study.

G. E. Milburn, Department of Geography and History, Sunderland Polytechnic, Forster Building, Chester Road, Sunderland SR1 3SD.

**Emin Pasha** (Dr Eduard Schnitzer) (1840-92), German-born explorer of Africa: information sought about the early history of the Schnitzer family of Süleia.

Max Lekus, 356 Daub Avenue, Hewlett, NY 11557, USA.

**Greek and Latin texts:** lists of Greek and Latin authors in print sought from publishers; for a bibliography.

David Perry, LUU Bookshop, PO Box 157, Leeds LS1 1UH.

**G. J. Gurdjieff:** any material based on personal experience; for a history of groups transmitting the ideas of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky in Britain since 1949.

James Moore, c/o Routledge and Kegan Paul, 39 Store Street, London WC1E 7DD.

**Robert Herring:** editor of *Life and Letters Today* (1935-50), and a resident of the Derbyshire village of Eckington during the 1940s and 1950s; information sought about his life and literary activities; for a book on notable residents of Eckington.

G. W. Shaw, 2 Church Street, Eckington, Derbyshire S31 9BH.

**Italian broadsides:** for a census of Italian broadsides dealing with health, sanitation and quarantine. It will be appreciated if anyone having knowledge or possession of such documents would inform the undersigned of the dates and number of the items. Full acknowledgement will be made.

Alice D. Weaver, 400 East 58th Street, New York, NY 10022.

**Kelmscott Press:** whereabouts of diaries, correspondence (especially of H. Halliday Sparling), proofs, trial pages, letterbooks, and account books; for a history of the Press.

William S. Peterson, Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

# The search for civic virtue

By Geoffrey Marshall

**MICHAEL WALZER:** *Radical Principles: Reflections of an unreconstructed democrat* 310pp. New York: Basic Books. \$15. 0 465 06824 3

Left-wing political theory is in such a fragmented state that when we meet an unreconstructed radical theorist our instinct may be to feel for him the sort of concern that all the King's horsemen must have felt when faced with Humpty Dumpty. It must be reported, however, that Michael Walzer has grappled boldly with the centrifugal forces of the past two decades and is in relatively good shape. He may now be a reconstructed socialist or a constructive liberal. In the United States some socialists do claim to be liberals and some liberals may call themselves socialists. But the labels matter less than the arguments. Here the arguments themselves command attention since they are forcefully – and often ingeniously or aphoristically – expressed. They also get better as they go along. In the earlier chapters the reader may find some difficulty in following the thread, since the themes are partly overlapping and there is a certain amount of imaginative leaping from one point to another. Still, that is in the nature of essay writing.

In the opening chapters Professor Walzer sets down some thoughts on the misfortunes of the modern radical. Some of the conclusions are of a negative, though not always of a dismal, kind. One such conclusion is that no further illumination is to be had from Marxist theory, either in the original or in its revised forms. The flux of events in the twentieth century cannot be accounted for by class terminology. Marxism has failed to produce either explanation or consolation for "the outbursts of irrational savagery, the long wars, the failure of working class parties to produce socialist societies, the depth and intensity of nationalist feeling and the drift towards authoritarianism". What Marxism has underestimated are two achievements of bourgeois culture: legal equality and legalized opposition. An unexpected degree of personal liberation has also proved possible without radical change in the structure of liberalism and capitalism. We might consider for example, Walzer says, our recently won right to watch live sex acts on stage, or the entitlement of religious groups to distribute drugs to their members, or the dwindling of religious orthodoxy that allows us to celebrate a black mass in our living-room. These examples of liberation in everyday life may, of course, be perceived as a source of bourgeois culture in which they might not be regarded as unequivocal

indices of the superior life opportunities made available by free-market capitalism. Nevertheless other examples could be chosen which would support the general proposition that Marxism has not succeeded in footing all the radicals all of the time.

Despite this, Walzer argues, it must be conceded that equality before the law, plus welfare benefits and free expression (even supplemented by the right to watch unrestrained stage performances with redeeming social content), cannot ultimately satisfy the radical temperament. This is the theme of the essay "Disaffection and the Welfare State". For radicals the growth of state power is both a necessary condition of reform and welfare and a threat to self-determination and group action. "In the long run, the issue for socialists is not state power, but power right here, on this shop floor, in this family, in this University, in this city." The mechanism of the welfare state, besides being compatible with great material inequality, may escape popular control and the electoral process be reduced to a last-ditch form of popular self-defence rather than an instrument of self-government. At this point the grievance imputed to the radical citizen of the welfare state is not very fully explained. He is said to be free to pursue happiness but not to be self-determining, since "he does not share political power and has not seized the system". The system, moreover, is something he is not free to reshape. It is not clear whether what is alleged at this point is an individual or a collective disability. It can hardly be the former. Individuals, unless they are Stalins or Churchills, are not able to reshape systems. If, on the other hand, the disability is one attaching to the electorate of the welfare state collectively, it is not sufficiently specified which precise features of the electoral and governmental process prohibit its use for reshaping purposes.

An equally serious item in the indictment is that the welfare state involves the withering-away of political energy. When the objects of the welfare state are achieved (some no doubt premature optimism here), the political struggle seems to be at an end (as it is in the final stages of the Marxist dialectic). So what the socialist finds disconcerting both about the welfare state and communism is that the achievement of its purposes signals the end of the kind of public activity and commitment that he finds enjoyable for his own sake. An unsympathetic reaction might just be to think that socialists are never satisfied. But there may be more to it than this. The notion of public and co-operative activity can certainly be perceived as a source of civic satisfaction and the theme is one that recurs in several of these essays. Walzer himself says in a post-

script that without a sense of shared commitment (which he originally obtained from the curiously support of the editors of *Dissent* in the 1950s) he could not imagine himself writing about politics at all. It may well be that a society said with welfare cannot sufficiently satisfy the radical's longing for co-operative endeavour towards some public end.

A similar idea appears in the essay "The Nature of Civility and Civic Virtue in Contemporary America". One of the elements in civic virtue, it is suggested, is the willingness to become committed to a political cause. Citizens who feel no such inclination and are wrapped up in private affairs (or who wish to keep them separate from politics) are a standing affront to such feelings and to those who are moved by them to collective action. In extreme cases the provocation thus afforded may drive radicals into frenetic activity, and occasionally into depression or madness. It is certainly noticeable that the rhetoric of the Left assumes a low provocation-threshold in the face of activities of all kinds that are disapproved of on ideological grounds. When the radical theorist comes to consider the nature of civic virtue, he finds himself pulled in different directions. Some aspects of civic virtue involve restraint, tolerance and loyalty to established norms, and others involve activism, zeal, proselytization and, in appropriate cases, resistance to the established order. Trying to define civic virtue is perhaps an activity more appropriate to the radical citizens of a republic than to the socialist subjects of a monarchy (who for the most part feel no need to define it or to display it). Walzer lists the causes, or at least the signs, of the decline of civic virtue in the United States. They are draft resistance, domestic violence, challenges to academic freedom, the new acceptance of pornography and a lessening in the fervour with which national holidays are celebrated. What, he asks, in the face of this, are we to expect of citizens "each of whom represents, as Rousseau would have said, 1/200,000,000th of the General Will"? Rousseau's unhelpful answer would of course have been that the citizen should stop willing in the interest of 1/200,000,000th (of the Will of All, if we are to be exact) and start willing generally. Walzer's list of symptoms suggests that he should join the army, support the civil liberties union, subscribe to a respectable book club and stay away from street demonstrations.

But the question of civic virtue is a complicated one. Even if we agree that the activities in question are accurate indications of a decline in its incidence, it does not directly follow that the sum total of civic virtue in society has diminished. Some of the practices frowned upon

may perhaps be confined to a minority of the population. Declining to celebrate national holidays is a case in point. In the United States the number of days nationally dedicated to good causes must have increased, so that an undiminished amount of celebration is more thinly spread. In the United Kingdom the celebration of national, bank and other holidays has increased to the point where the end of the one celebration is never far from the beginning of the next, so that we may be suffering in some respects from too much civic virtue rather than too little.

In the middle section of the book the deficiencies of the New Left are examined in some detail. In America the contrasts between the old and the new Left are perhaps more clear-cut than in Europe. On the face of it the Vietnam war and the struggle for black civil rights were obvious differences, but Walzer's analysis implies that both were the occasion for, rather than the cause of, the radical commitment of the white student generation of the 1960s. "Once the call went out it is clear that many of them had been waiting, but why had they been waiting?" The answer suggested is a variation on the welfare-state frustration theory. An affluent generation were deprived by their privileged situation of the opportunity for political struggle and commitment. They revolted, not as in some other generations because of the emptiness of their parents' lives, since many of their parents' lives had been full of struggle, risk-taking and achievement, but because of the absence they foresaw of these elements in their own lives. This sounds plausible, but it cannot fully explain the character of New Left politics and in particular its inclination towards confrontation and violence. In America, it is suggested, an initially gentle middle-class radical group learnt about violence from its involvement with the poor, whose lives were themselves violent. Such an explanation carries less conviction in Britain where urban working-class life has not been characterized by violence to the same degree.

Walzer's radicalism is not the new radicalism, which, to a far greater degree, is exposed to the dangers inherent in radical commitment generally, in that it is high on participative but defective on account-

ability. Some remarks, half-seriously made in the essay "A Day in the Life of a Socialist Citizen", point to one reason for Walzer's differing stance: "Participation means the sharing of power among the activists" and "Socialism means the rule of the people with most evenings to spare". The exploitation of such possibilities by activists with evenings, not to say mornings and afternoons, to spare, has been one of the mechanisms by which the Labour Party in Britain has been led to its direct and possibly final split. One beneficial result of the disenchantment on either side of this divide has been that socialists of the traditional or, in Walzer's language, "unreconstructed" variety have been unlesioned from the restraints of loyalty to a no longer existing unified movement and feel free to denounce the wildest extravagances of radical rhetoric and action. That tendency is seen at full blast in Professor Walzer's essay "Violence, the Police, the Militants and the Rest of Us", which could be applauded by any conservative or liberal. It makes short work of the slipshod phraseology and sentiment of "authoritarian repression" and "police brutality". If the far Left were to seize power "the rest of us would have no reason to suppose that they would be any different from the people they call 'pigs'". The rejection of restraint on the Left, Walzer says, is the equivalent of extreme and unrestrained laissez-faire on the Right, and it is that extremism on the Left which "makes statist of us all".

Parts two and three of *Radical Principles* contain discussions of theories of revolution, equality and education. Since the late Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, readable theoretical analyses of the problems of democratic socialism have not been plentiful, and unreconstructed British social democrats, struggling to get themselves together, will find much to attract them in these essays. It may strike them, however, that a topic of some importance is missing. A satisfactory testament of democratic socialism must deal at some length with the role of trade unions in the pre-socialist society. What is needed is an extra chapter on "Civic Virtue in an Age of Inflation with Free Collective Bargaining".

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The small brown nun in the corner seat  
Smiles out of her wimple and out of her window  
Through thick round glasses and through the glass,  
And her wimple is white and her habit neat  
And whatever she thinks she does not show  
As the train jacks on and the low fields pass.

The beer is warm and the train is late  
And smoke floats out of the carriage window.  
Crosswords are puzzled and papers read,  
But the nun, as smooth as a just washed plate,  
Does nothing at all but smiles as we go,  
As if she listened to something said.

Not here, or beyond, or out in the night,  
A close old friend with a gentle joke.  
Telling her something through the window  
Inside her head, all neat and right  
And snug as the white bound round the yolk  
Of a small brown egg in a nest in the snow.

Anthony Thwaite



## Conflicts of complexion

By Carol Rumens

TONI MORRISON:

*Tar Baby*  
302pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.95.  
0 7011 2596 9

HELEN WASHINGTON (Editor):

*Any Woman's Blues*  
Stories by Contemporary Black Women Writers  
274pp. Virago. £3.50.  
0 86068 204 8

*Tar Baby* is the complex, dramatic story of a Caribbean household of expatriates. Toni Morrison dextrously interweaves the lives of a white millionaire, Valerian Street, whose fortune was made in candy, his wife Margaret, their honey-skinned protégée Jodie and the black servants, Sydney, Ondine, Thérèse and Gideon, who help them to sustain an outwardly harmonious but nevertheless impelled existence on the Isle des Chevaliers. The threat to the Street household is not material; rather it derives from unresolved conflicts within and between these brilliantly differentiated personalities - conflicts set in action by the arrival of an interloper discovered hiding in Margaret's bedroom, the black fugitive whose real name is Son.

As the story unfolds we see that complexion is a much more subtle issue than the simple polarization of black and white. Margaret for example has always been an outsider, even in her own community; her fair-skinned, red-haired beauty belied her Latin ancestry, and caused her parents to treat her with an admiring but puzzled reserve. Corresponding to Margaret's whiter-than-whiteness is the less-than-blackness of the beautiful Jodie. The niece of Sydney and Ondine, she has been expensively educated by Valerian. With her degree from the Sorbonne, her fur coat made of the skins of "ninety baby seals", and her picture on the cover of *Elle*, she seems in exemplify an effortless transition from one culture to another. A deep conflict is, however, manifested in her recurrent nightmares, and when Son appears it is to present her with a radical challenge to her Westernization.

Son and Jodie embark on a passionate love affair, and run away to New York. But Son is ill at ease in the big city where Jodie is most at home. He is drawn back to the small-town camaraderie of Elie, his birthplace; here, Jodie is tormented by nightmares and boredom. During a spectacular argument, he suspends her by her wrists from an upstairs window and quotes at her the Uncle Remus fable of the Tar Baby. In his version, it is a white farmer who builds the Tar Baby, a trap which initially catches, but is then fooled

by, the resourceful Brer Rabbit. It is a dual symbolism for both Son and Jodie; just as he represents for her the ensnaring horror of her own roots, her cultivated beauty is for him a magnetic temptation to self-betrayal.

Although the events concerning Son and Jodie take place after the denouement in which, at the Streets' disastrous Christmas dinner, Ondine reveals a terrible truth about Margaret's past, Morrison's narrative skills completely forestall any sense of anticlimax. The novel's plot moves inexorably to a conclusion in which Son's death seems probable but by no means inevitable. He has arrived once more on the island, this time disembarking on the far, uninhabited side, said to be haunted by the blind horsemen descended from the first slaves to be shipped there: the Chevaliers. We do not know whether Son will choose Jodie, and death, or the racial integrity symbolized by the wild terrain of the horsemen. But as he runs through the trees, the sound of his feet - "lickety split, lickety split" - echoes the slap of Brer Rabbit's paws in the Uncle Remus tale - "lickety clippity, lickety clippity"; so perhaps we are to infer that Son's instinct for survival will triumph over his passion and his essential innocence.

Morrison is not an easy writer. Her prose is rich and allusive, and she has a habit of anticipating her plot in a seemingly casual phrase

that only acquires its full meaning after one has read on, and back. The ease with which she thinks and sees in symbols means that the reader must be constantly alert as to where a metaphor ends and straight narrative begins. Sometimes she will develop a conceit over several pages; when, for example, wisps of fog are described as "the hair of maiden aunts" it is a cue for the aunts themselves to materialize and provide a distant chorus of commentary during the ensuing action. Clouds and trees share sentence with human beings; during the rape of the Isle by the first settlers, the river, diverted, becomes "ill and grieving", and the fish "race off to carry the news of the scatterbrained river to the peaks of hills and the tops of the champion daisy trees". The dreams and even the thoughts of many of the characters have a vivid, wakeful actuality. The amalgamation of different imaginative elements into a single imagery gives Morrison's work its density, and this is combined with a superb dramatic sense.

Not surprisingly, the stories in *Any Woman's Blues* cannot match the depth and breadth of Morrison's vision, but there are nevertheless some lovely contributions by a variety of black women writers including Mozake Shange and Alice Walker. A fiercely harrowing extract from an earlier Toni Morrison novel, *Sula*, is perhaps not the most enticing introduction to her work for new readers.

## On Grand Central station ...

By Linda Taylor

LISA ZEIDNER:

*Customs*  
272pp. Cape. £6.95.  
0 224 02523 1

In Lisa Zeidner's first novel, *Customs*, the compulsive story-teller Mildred Howell, dying of a malignant tumour and heart trouble, buttonholes the novel's narrator, Jennifer Spell, at Grand Central Station. She proceeds to tell her tale which begins in 1880 and conveniently arrives at the present day just before Mildred dies of heart failure after a mugging in Washington Square.

Like the good witch of fairy tales, Mildred's derelict outward appearance hides a still youthful body. She is eighty years old and dresses like a tramp, but her hair is long and blonde and "only slightly thinning at the ends", and her skin is flawless. Mildred claims to be magic; she also has a vast amount of money which goes a long way to aid her eccentricity and tricks. At the beginning of the novel, Mildred specifies its framework:

"This story will take a long time to tell - weeks. Maybe months. There are eleven major characters in my story and you will have to concentrate to get their names straight, no less learn to love them. I'll try to answer your forebodings and provide enough foreshadowing to keep your faith, but it's my story, not yours. Is that clear?"

Yes, very clear, and pretty good advice to any listener/reader. Jennifer, in particular, needs to be a good listener because Mildred's story, both literally and metaphorically, tells her much about her own life.

Through the vagaries of coincidence, Jennifer Spell's history turns out to be linked to Mildred's. Mildred's story gradually reveals how they are both related to a very odd set of incestuous goings-on who were responsible for founding a town called Tourism in the French Alps before turning their attention to America. In Paris and Pils and Casey and Katey and Kisa and Gato and Frog lies the key to Lisa Zeidner's symbolism. My story

is about tourists in the sense that all of us are tourists," says Mildred, and the town is the setting for a complicated interweaving of transient lives. But, as Mildred has warned us, the story does take a long time to tell - approximately half of the twenty-four chapters; it is hard to get the characters' names straight (not to mention their relationships) and it's almost impossible to love their particular brand of petulant romanticism. The story's complicated irrelevance heavily outweighs any pleasure that is to be gained from its light-heartedness. The point about tourists could have been made more economically.

Jennifer, meanwhile, freed by her meeting with Mildred from her own allegiances to work and to her boyfriend, moves from an initial healthy scepticism. "That's the problem with this story. You talk all right, but sometimes I'm not sure how it's supposed to pay off", to guilty consideration, "I don't know what to do to return her kindness" (Mildred has given her a Steiway). "The only

thing I could think to do was to listen to her story better, to be more enthusiastic about her story". The pay-off for Jennifer's attentiveness and for her growing devotion to Mildred is the inheritance of a portion of the money and, more importantly, of Mildred's eccentricity. At the end of the novel, Jennifer's newly acquired irresponsibility hangs in the air: "I could barely walk in my high French shoes, but I was as giddy as a schoolgirl and not ashamed. I was a citizen of the heart; I could afford to be a tourist." Like the most adventurous of tourists, she has begun to acquire a disregard for customs, and it presumably won't be long before she is found at Grand Central Station in baggy stockings and untucked blouse telling the Tourist's tale.

Lisa Zeidner is very good at one-liners. "Sundays are only airbrushed to the calendar", "making love was non-caloric", "the Spells did not believe in God. We didn't like melodrama", and so on. This kind of knife-edged detail, though it has a tendency to turn into continuous

chirpiness, is what most strongly defines the character of Jennifer. The novel is at its best when dealing with her relationship with Mildred.

When it comes to the story within the story, though - the one that Casey told Mildred who told it to Jennifer who tells it to us - Dan Quixote seems to have got it right. "Tell it concisely," he says, faced with Sancho's digressive narrative about the goats, "and like a man of sense, or else say no more". Then, reluctantly agreeing to Sancho's conditions, Dan Quixote forgets to count the goats, and the story comes to an end. Fortunately for Mildred, Jennifer gets better and better at counting the goats, and the story goes on.

Not only is *Customs* incestuous in its subject matter, for in the narrator, Jennifer, teller and listener are combined. The internal story strikes resounding chords in her, while the reader is left puzzled and dissatisfied - a somewhat obsolete voyeur of Jennifer's liaison with herself.

## Wearing the gold stud

By T. J. Binyon

DAN KAVANAGH:

*Fiddle City*  
173pp. Cape. £5.95.  
0 224 01977 5

Dan Kavanagh's first crime novel, *Duffy*, introduced his private investigator hero: a bisexual, blouson-clad ex-policeman with a longish brush cut and a gold stud in one ear, who has been framed off the force by a bent copper and a Soho racketeer. The book was widely - and rightly - praised. It was a stylish, witty piece of work which began with a bang and kept up the pace throughout, working up a good head of moral indignation on the way: a sharply drawn, convincing picture of the Soho of massage parlours, cinema clubs and peep shows, which had a plot of just the right complexity and a distinctly frightening villain - a Mr Big with an Oxford accent and a

worrying way with a cheese wire.

Duffy was obviously too good a character to let go, and in this sequel Dan Kavanagh brings him back and plants him in another of London's plague spots - Heathrow, otherwise known as Thiefrow or Fiddle City. A small freight company finds that far too much stuff is falling off the back of its lorries, and calls in Duffy to investigate. But there's more than just nicking going on, and Duffy's gold stud comes in for some considerable wear and tear before matters are eventually cleared up.

Though he's billed as bisexual - a description that's often repeated - Duffy spends most of his free time trawling for trade at the Alligator, a gay club in Fulham. And it's tempting to compare him with Dave Brandstetter. Joseph Hansen's homosexual Californian insurance investigator.

Obvious differences are that Californian is a more colourful background than Fulham, and that Duffy, unlike Brandstetter, doesn't have

friends who wear chunky gold chasals and crushed velvet jumpsuits open to the novel. Yet, though Kavanagh is a better and a more amusing writer than Hansen, he hasn't managed to give Duffy the solidity as a character that Brandstetter undoubtedly possesses. Duffy is obsessive about cleanliness, hates the ticking of clocks and watches at night, can't stand the telephone, dislikes aeroplanes and is more than somewhat tactiturn, but there's no centre to hold his amiable eccentricities together and make him into a credible personality. And *Fiddle City* is a disappointment after *Duffy* in that the author has shortchanged his readers as far as intrigue is concerned - very unlike Hansen, who usually overeggs his pudding in this respect.

But the kind of criticism one feels bound to make indicates that the books are a cut or two above normal examples of the genre. Villains and their villainy may be obvious after the first few pages, but Kavanagh keeps one reading.

## Images of undivided souls

By Louis Allen

RICHARD TAMES:

*Servant of the Shogun*  
144pp. Tenterden: Paul Norbury.  
£5.95. (paperback, £3.50).  
0 904404 39 0

HENRY SMITH (Editor):

*Learning from Shogun*  
Japanese History and Western Fantasy  
163pp. Program in Asian Studies,  
University of California, Santa Barbara,  
California 93106. \$4.95.

MICHAEL MACINTYRE:

*The Shogun Inheritance*  
Japan and the Legacy of the Samurai  
216pp. Collins/BBC. £12.95.  
0 00 216350 0

The problem in relation to James Clavell's *Shogun* is not one of sales but of the permanence of the image of Japan it has created in all its various widespread avatars: book, film, boardgame, and a television mini-series which I watched with increasingly hilarious disbelief in a Tokyo flat this spring. It is a splendid story, but then, so is the story upon which it is based, the nineteenth century were compelled to reintroduce and then spent decades trying to reverse.

To some extent Tames's matter-of-fact narrative helps us to understand the Japanese policy of *sakoku*, or "closing the country". Whether they were really threatened by what they took to be Iberian conspirators on the one hand, or English and Welsh roisterers on the other, the Japanese can have had little reason to feel affection for their European visitors. Only the brother keepers had cause to welcome them, so much so that they threatened to kill any ship's officer who ventured on land to reclaim his men. Characteristically, on a journey to the Shogun's capitol of Edo, Captain John Saris's sailors passed through Kamakura and

the country that later arrivals from the East India Company thought him "a naturalized Japanese". But Adams also conspired with the Dutch, who were destroying all Spanish and Portuguese shipping in the South China sea-lanes and the East Indies. When they extended their depredations to the English, seizing an English vessel, Richard Cocks, representing the Company in Japan, was infuriated that the Shogun refused to take measures against them. He was deeply suspicious of Adams's lack of enthusiasm for an attack on the Dutch.

Yet it is clear that Adams's greatest tribulations - and the Company's - were not the Japanese authorities nor the heretic-hunting Spaniards but his own drunken, lecherous and blaspheming fellow-countrymen. Time and again, the English seamen went ashore in Japan to seek out women and liquor and fields in which to fight. Perhaps one should add that they were not all English - the worst hooligans were called Williams and Evans. In the light of all this, Japanese forbearance was quite remarkable, as was the Shogun Ieyasu's willingness to let the English try their own malefactors - a concession Japanese politicians in the nineteenth century were compelled to reintroduce and then spent decades trying to reverse.

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called to see the great bronze Buddha which was to attract Kipling's attention more than two centuries later. "This image is much revered by Travellers as they pass," Saris noted. It did not deter his seamen. "Some of our people," he added, "went into the body of it, and hooped and hallowed, which made an exceedingly great noise." Ironically enough, in 1952 the British Ambassador Sir Esler Denning failed to turn up at the annual ceremony to celebrate the memorial stone to Adams in Ito because, the *Nippon Times* averred, there was a dispute between Japan and Britain over two British sailors imprisoned for robbery.

The massive structure James Clavell has erected upon the life of Will Adams has, of course, borne all kinds of fruit. There is even a book about how the television series was made from the original book; and Santoro is said to have named an improbable mixture of wine and sake after it. The editor of *Learning from Shogun* believes that its impact on the reading and viewing public has been and will be enormous. It is his further contention, though, which is interesting; if it is so enormous, then American students of Japanese - the Japanologists of the future - will be affected by it, and may even in some cases have received their first impulses towards Japanese from it. So rather than give a scholarly sniff at a work which is so much a part of the Japanese consciousness, Barbara professors have decided to grin and bear it, and to use the inevitable reading of *Shogun* as a basis for instruction as well as rectification.

The venture is both intriguing and wrong-headed. It is hard for an outsider to analyse the soul of a people, particularly when for three years he was, like Clavell, that people's prisoner-of-war. The very attempt to write *Shogun* in the first place is very much to Clavell's credit. He makes no mystery of this:

Well, I learned fairly young about the Japanese and their attitudes toward life. I was barely eighteen, I was a teenager, right? We were surrounded by death and destruction, people died like flies. So I have different attitudes towards things. . . . I just admire the Japanese. It's possible in end up admiring an enemy. The relationship of conqueror and conquered can be an intriguing one; it doesn't necessarily lead to hate.

Clavell's attempt to come in grips with his former enemy, not merely in terms of invented narrative but also of sheer information, has led to the acquisition and display of a vast farrago of "knowledge" about Japan, which the editor of *Learning from Shogun*, Professor Henry Smith, clearly believes can be of great use. In fact he seems somewhat overawed by it and it has given his own book a defiant little anti-academic twist:

In sheer quantity, *Shogun* has probably conveyed more information about Japan to more people than all the combined writings of scholars, journalists and novelists since the Pacific War . . . this immensely influential novel about Japan should encourage academic specialists to rethink some basic issues of communication: Who is our audience? What are we trying to say? And how are we trying to say it?

But isn't this to consider the novel-form as the one thing it is least, a conveyor of information? Underestimated by critical scruples - in fact the positive excludes any literary consideration of *Shogun* - Smith declares that it is information content which sets it apart from its predecessors. For Will Adams has already been the hero of half-a-dozen novels:

At a purely descriptive level, *Shogun* is a virtual encyclopedia of Japanese history and culture; somewhere among those half-million words, one

can find a brief description of virtually everything one wanted to know about Japan.

An awesome claim; and quite unfounded. The Japanese have long been vulnerable to false interpretations by foreigners. On-the-spot observation by missionaries or consuls has had less impact than the lingering notes of a forlorn soprano or the justification of Gilbert and Sullivan. That is why, feeling that westerners have not always seen them as they are but as a cartoon drawn in terms of what westerners want to see, the post-war Japanese have been much exercised to change that cartoon into a portrait, or at any rate into some sort of likeness of what they conceive themselves to be. Whether they are right about themselves is, of course, another matter.

Michiko Kaya runs an organization for revising the reports on Japan that appear in western textbooks - the International Society for Educational Information - and has done a painstaking job over several decades in rectifying slips of detail and massive errors of interpretation. Her reaction to *Shogun* is far from favourable:

the strong interest in feudal Japan it has created will not pose any problem as long as readers regard the story as semi-historical fiction. Recently, however, an American University proposed that *Shogun* should be used as a basis for a secondary school textbook. In as much as *Shogun* is historical fiction, as indeed is stated by its author, and in a number of ways does not present an accurate picture of Japanese customs, language or way of thought even in the feudal age, its widespread use as an educational instrument is inadvisable. An exciting and well-written story on a subject unfamiliar to its readers may mislead them in thinking that fiction is fact. Fiction writers, in any country, have the prerogative of colouring or

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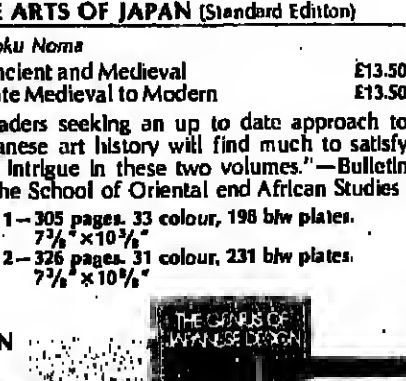
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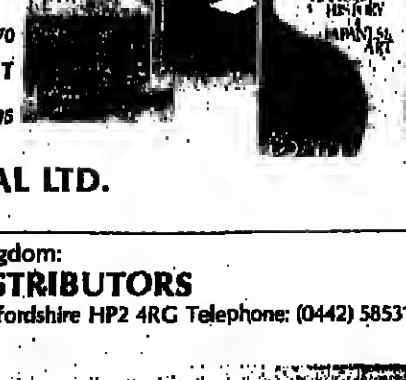
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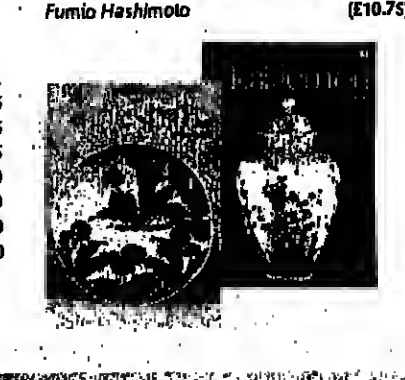
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## An album of agonies

By Michael Sullivan

JOHN W. DOWER, Editor

A Century of Japanese Photography 385pp with 514 illustrations. Hinchinson, £25.  
0 09 14550 6

In his introduction to this richly illustrated and disturbing book John Dower warns his reader that the photograph can be not only a record but a distorting mirror of the past. It can, he writes,

confer a kind of arbitrary immortality upon those images and events that happen to be captured; and what is a compelling way of remembering can simultaneously operate as a way of forgetting, as later generations lose sight of what for one reason or another was not preserved, or memorably preserved, on film... and terrible violence can be done to the past as the camera turns upon its person. These pictures, fragments into wholes, transience into permanence, minute splinters of time into eternities—or offers a romantic pallor to what actually may have been experienced as routine, mundane, miserable, painful, heart-breaking.

This is well put and worth bearing in mind as we leaf through this extraordinary collection; but does not art do this too, and more effectively? There is not much romance here. When we compare the cool, elegant woodcuts of Utamaro with the photograph of a post-house prostitute by an unknown photographer of the Bakumatsu or early Meiji period, we are struck by the sordidness the camera reveals despite the studied pose, and which the pure line and colour of a Utamaro print refines away.

The historical introduction, based largely but not entirely on that to the original Japanese edition *Nihon Shashin Shi, 1840-1945* of 1971, notes that dogerietypes were being made in Japan by masters of "Dutch learning" even before the arrival of Commodore Perry's Black Ships in 1853, and perhaps as early as 1841. The collodion wet-plate process was introduced in the late 1850s, in time to capture the twilight of the Tokugawa era, the upheaval of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and the hopeless rebellions of conservative samurai that went on till 1877. Japan had no Matthew Brady to record her civil wars in detail, but the few photographs that do survive from this period are telling enough. The dying convulsions of feudalism are vividly brought home in Ueno Hikoma's portraits of young samurai, which show these men not as romantic knights-errant but as they really were—dedicated killers. Indeed the overwhelming impression given by this book is of a harsh, uncompromising and utterly impersonal realism which, to those accustomed to thinking of old Japan in terms of gelshe, cherry blossoms and the tea ceremony must be extremely disconcerting. Even many of the "art photographs" of the 1920s are harsh in form and texture.

Japanese attitudes to photography were different from those of China. To start with they both feared it. "Once photographed," ran a Japanese saying, "your shadow will fade; twice photographed, your life will shorten," and if three people were photographed together the middle one would die young. Before long, however, photography was promoted as an aid to modernization and self-strengthening. John Thompson in China in the 1860s noted that unlike the Japanese, who often look to one side of the picture, the Chinese refused to be photographed in any pose but full face. Even today Chinese make a little ritual of it, while the photograph, like the printed portrait, has moral overtones: it was common some years ago to be photographed in double exposure kneeling to oneself, to illustrate the Confucian adage "better to expose yourself than anyone else." If the photograph in Japan has any such social function, it appears in the 1930s, when school history

or business, the purpose of which as Dower notes, is to bind the group together in manifest loyalty.

Superstitions about being photographed lingered on until recent times in China. The painter Chung Dai Chien tells that in the 1940s a high official in Sichuan, seeing in the ground-glass plate of a portrait camera the image of his stand-in upside down, had the photographer arrested for sorcery. A more important difference lies in Chinese and Japanese attitudes to picture-making in general. Some of the greatest Japanese art is a record of violence or prostitution. If we could imagine a comparable Chinese volume to this, it would consist largely of art photographs—still-lives and landscapes, such as those of Chin San Lang, who combines several negatives to create the effect of a traditional painting, complete with inscription and seals. Lang even claims that he applies to photographs the famous Six Principles of painting of the sixteenth-century critic Xie He.

The influence of painting on photography in this book is not, as one might expect, that of the traditional Tosa and Kano Schools, but of Monet, Rouault, van Gogh and Dali, following the European influences on twentieth-century Japanese painting. These pictures in the chapter entitled "The Epoch of Development" are so oppressive in tone that it is hard to derive much pleasure from them; rather, they seem to express the defiance of the avant garde of the 1920s and 1930s before it was engulfed in the tide of Japanese militarism. So they, too, are documents in history. After the art photographs, *A Century of Japanese Photography* has a section on advertisement and propaganda, and ends, as it began, with images of war: horrifying pictures that confront us with the full meaning of the Rape of Nanking; American prisoners of the beginning of the Bataan "death march"; still clean, well-fed, oblivious of what was in store for them; and, inevitably, the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Images of that tranquillity for which the Japanese way of life is known abroad are few. Almost the only smile among these myriad faces is the defiant grin of a Chinese woman guerrilla captured in 1938 and no doubt about to face the executioner.

The value of a book such as this lies in great part in the documentary significance of the photographs. The introduction and bibliographical note do their job expertly, but the special-

ist will regret the absence of any technical notes on the individual photographs, while the general reader will be mystified by some of the captions. What, for instance, were the Seimant and Boshin wars? Who was Vice-Admiral Enomoto? It would add a good deal to the interest of the book if we were told that the wars were to suppress samurai insurrections, and that Enomoto had spent six years before the Meiji Restoration in Holland, that he was a loyal supporter of the last Shōgun, was besieged for six months in Hakodate by the imperial forces, was imprisoned, and survived to become a loyal servant of the Meiji Emperor, and ambassador to Russia and Peking.

Every collection of old Far Eastern photographs contains its quota of punishments and executions. The contents of this book are horrific enough without much of that, but one such photograph "Beholding of a spy on the outskirts of Kiyomura," is of particular interest, although there is no comment on it in the text. In 1906 the great Chinese writer and polemicist Lu Xun, when a medical student in Sendai, saw a picture, thrown on the screen after a lecture, of the execution by the Japanese of a Chinese allegedly caught spying for the Russians, while his companions stood around gaping. Disgusted at the supine attitude of his countrymen, Lu Xun quit Sendai, convinced that what China needed was not medicine but a change of spirit, and resolved to found a literary movement. The term Lu Xun uses in his *Call to Arms* for the picture is *dianying* (usually "motion picture"), which caused Jan Leyda in his *Electric Shadows: An Account of the Film and Film Audiences in China* (1972) to identify as the picture Lu Xun saw a frame from an early newsreel. But there is no evidence that Japanese medical students saw newsreels in 1906, and this blurred photograph still does not match Lu Xun's detailed description, which the photograph of 1905 reproduced here exactly does.

This is just one instance of the historical importance of many of these pictures, which might have been brought out in more informative captions. Nevertheless, even without them, the more than 500 photographs, competed between the gangster images of samurai and the obliteration of Hiroshima, speak eloquently enough of hardship, violence, public and private agony. The cumulative effect is shattering.

## Rooting around

Richard Storry

MARIUS JANSEN

Japan and Its World

Two Centuries of Change

128pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £5.30.

0 691 05310 3

This extremely perceptive work is a collection of lectures delivered to a university audience by one of the most eminent American academic specialists in modern Japanese political history. As Professor Jansen observes in his introduction, "the intellectual and psychological aspects of the Japanese world view have deeper historical roots than the speculations of journalists and pundits." To illustrate what he considers to be the most significant shifts in this world view, Jansen constructs his lectures round the careers and opinions of certain figures whom he regards as particularly interesting, starting with the remarkable Sugita Gempaku (1733-1817), a doctor passionately interested in Dutch studies—the Dutch being the channel through which Tokugawa Japan had access to the contemporary European world. It was Sugita who demonstrated from the dissection of a corpse that orthodox Chinese medical theory was fallacious; since it presented a totally wrong picture of the position and shape of organs in the human

body. Sugita's discovery amounted to a serious blow to the prestige of Chinese studies, and therefore a challenge to the Confucian world view. Since Sugita lived to a ripe old age he was able to promote the development of *rangaku*, "Dutch studies", over many years. It was from this school of intellectuals that the Tokugawa government, when forced to open its doors, recruited the staff of an "Institute of barbarian learning", which stood, indirectly, as the ancestor of Tokyo University.

Subsequent lectures discuss the importance of such personalities as Kume Kunikida (1839-1931) the *reporteur* of the famous "government learning mission" which toured the world in 1871-73, the late Premier Yoshida, and the present Chairman of International House, Tokyo, Mr. Matsumoto Shigeharu. There have been great men, not always successful in their aims, but very influential in the long-run; Japanese society in the post-war years owes them a debt beyond all calculation. Both a summary and an analysis, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (706pp, Hutchinson. £20. 0 09 1456401), compiled by an anonymous committee composed of some of Japan's leading physicists, physicians and sociologists, is a comprehensive account of the permanent medical, genetic, social and psychological effects caused by the two atomic bombs on the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The rewards are considerable. Nearly 200 million Japanese live in a society with one of the highest literacy rates in the world. They are book-buyers, not borrowers, and along with science fiction they love to read what are variously called *shin shosetsu* (novels of reasoning), *tenki shosetsu* (detective stories) or simply *unio* or *kritai* from the English. Whodunits as a group are known as *pazura* (puzzlers), while thrillers derived from the Fleming school or the novels of Desmond Bagley are classified as *hondo-boitudo* (hard-boiled), and are likely to be adorned with drawings of lean, well-muscled hit-men firing guns in the manner of James Bond, or foreign girls removing the bottom halves of their bikinis.

Print orders are of a size to make all but the blockbuster best-selling authors of the West gasp in envy. An established Japanese crime writer will have his new book serialized in one of the many weekly or monthly magazines, even occasionally in a daily paper. The first hard-cover edition will be of about 10,000 copies, and the paperback will soon be on every bookshelf on the subway and commuter line stations in an edition of perhaps a quarter of a million. Writers in the premier league will read double those numbers, and the amazingly of all, will in all probability produce three or four books a year.

The man who inherited the mantle of Edogawa Ranpo and is the most senior and the most generally admired writer in the field is Matsumoto Sei-ichi, who was born in 1910 in a small town in the long-river, and whose prolific output has by now means been confined to crime fiction. He is a considerable stylist, though the apologetic nature of his prose poses many problems for translators, and is inclined to emerge as flat and lifeless in the few English translations which have been made.

Mr. Matsumoto's latest crime novel is *Jumanbin up Ichi no Guzen* (A Chance in a Million). Literally, *Jumanbin* means 100,000th, but one of the minor hazards of life for foreigners in Japan is getting in a muddle over numbers, and the sense of the title is preserved. In his new book

## The Edogawa Ranpo tradition

By James Melville

MATSUMOTO SEI-ICHI:

Jumanbin up Ichi no Guzen

350pp. Tokyo: Bungei Shunju

TENDO SHIN:

Tshiki ni Me Arite

244pp. Tokyo: Yamata Shobo

NISHIMURA KYOTARO:

Shuehakeki Satsujin Jiken

263pp. Tokyo: Kohunsha

YOKOMIZO SEISHI:

Gokumon Shima

355pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

YOKOMIZO SEISHI:

Akuma as Temuri Ure

493pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

NIKI ETSUKO:

Satsujin Hakenzu

214pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

NATSUKI SHIZUKO:

Johatsu

420pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

MORIMURA SEI-ICHI:

Nihanga

457pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

OYABU HARUHIKO:

Chohokuyaku Hakai Han-In

285pp. Tokyo: Tokuma.

IKUSHIMA JIRO:

Massatsu Shirei

215pp. Tokyo: Tokuma.

AKAGAWA JIRO:

Yurei Ressha

334pp. Tokyo: Bungei Shunju.

AWASAKA TSUMAO:

Katol no Melsuri

306pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

Mr. Matsumoto quietly and gently unravels the story of a young woman killed in a pile-up on the expressway which links the cities of Tokyo and Nagoya. A witness catches the incident in a photograph, submitted to a newspaper as an entry for their "Reader's Photo of the Month" competition. The mood is low-key, the background entirely convincing, the cumulative effect impressive.

Another veteran writer is Tendo Shin, whose career refutes the theory that there is no room for individualists in Japan. After working as a reporter for a news agency, Mr. Tendo took himself off to the country while still a youngish man and became a farmer, taking to novel writing some twenty years ago. In the energetic world of Japanese letters he takes a certain pride in being reckoned as an idle sort of fellow, working at what Japanese call, in English, "my pace" to produce a book every year or two. His quirky, mannered style with touches of sly humour is well exemplified in his new book, *Tshiki ni Me Arite* (A Detached View), which consists of five longish stories originally published in monthly magazines. Mr. Tendo aligns himself with the writers of puzzles, as such titles as *Too Many Witnesses*, *Perfect Alibi* and *Denki in Thin Air* indicate, and in Inspector Mamebe he has created an agreeable investigator.

Nishimura Kyotaro's Inspector Totsukawa is perhaps a touch more bureaucratic, and in *Shuehakeki Satsujin Jiken* (Murder of the Terminus) he shows admirable dedication to duty, as well as a minute understanding of topography and railway timetables, as he investigates the killing of an official of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry who had planned to leave from Ueno Station in Tokyo, with a group of former schoolmates to celebrate the seventh anniversary of their graduation from senior high school in Aomori Prefecture to the north. Improbable as it may seem, professional persons in Japan habitually do this kind of thing, though seldom with fatal results.

With eight hungry channels in Tokyo, and three or four at least in virtually every part of Japan, television is a voracious though reputedly parsimonious consumer of crime fiction, and a number of writers have been adapted to the small screen. One such is Yokomizo Seishi, the creator of a pleasing amateur sleuth in the person of the scholarly oddball Kindachi Kosuke. In *Gokumon Shima* (Prison Gate Island) Kindachi investigates a nightmare series of murders which take place on a legend-ridden island in Japan's scenic Inland Sea, giving us by way of bonus an account of the political significance of the place dating from the fourteenth-century seikan in the Imperial Family. One of the reasons why Mr. Yokomizo's books make good television is that he gives his readers plenty of local colour, and does so again in *Akuma no Temuri Ure* (The Devil's Tomb Song), cleverly constructed, distinctly chilling novel set in a remote village among the mountains of Western Japan. The erudite Kindachi once more fathoms inner meanings and delivers the goods.

Although women writers of crime fiction are not represented so strongly in Japan as in the West there can be no doubt about the security of the reputation of Niki Etsuko, sometimes known as Japan's Agatha Christie for no very obvious reason except that of her gender, and the fact that she writes "puzzlers" which command the respectful attention of her senior colleagues in the profession. Miss Niki proves herself a mean electrician in her latest brain-cracker, *Satsujin Hakenzu* (Wiring Diagram for Murder), in which a journalist called Yoshimura investigates at the request of an old University friend the apparently accidental death of a relative, the father of a three-year-old girl, who may not have fallen by accident from a third-floor verandah as the police concluded.

Natsuki Shizuko is another successful woman crime writer, with a sharp line in social comment. In recent years her best book has probably been *Johatsu* (Evaporation). The initial impression derived from this book, subtitled "The End of a Love", is that it may turn out to be a tear-jerker for the women's magazines; but as yet another journalist looks into the disappearance of a woman to whom he was linked sexually the reader is helped towards new and interesting insights into human relationships in contemporary Japan.

Social comment of a different kind is to be found in a good novel by Morimura Sei-ichi, who was born in 1933 and is a winner of the Edogawa Ranpo Prize. His early adult life was coloured as for all Japanese of his generation by the American Occupation, and in *Nihanga* (Proof of Humanity) Mr. Morimura touches on the doubly sensitive subject of race relations and the American military presence. His story begins as diners in the glossy penthouse restaurant of a high-class hotel see the doors of the lift open and a few new arrivals emerge, leaving behind a young black man with a glassy expression and a knife in his chest. Police Detective Munegane discovers that this is far from being the most dramatic aspect of the case, whose action subsequently ranges from a Japanese hot-spring resort to New York.

Japanese are great globe-trotters, and believe that the next best thing to the exotic places is to read about them. Members of the barbed school of writers not only offer their readers liberal helpings of violence and cinematically fantasized sex, but almost always set their stories outside Japan. In *Chohokuyaku Hakai Han-In* (The Intelligence Bureau Elimination Operative) Oyabu Haruhiko spins a lively but improbable tale of stalking and pot-smuggling with an AR-15 rifle among coroneted beads in Monte Carlo, embellished with the dormant Throna of Carpathia, the Grand Prix car race and a good deal of Old Crow bourbon whisky. On the other hand *Yurei Ressha* in *Massatsu Shirei* (Order to Liquidate) favours Martinis by the poolside in Bangkok and quick dashes to Hong Kong and Las Vegas against a disconcertingly credible background of crooked Japanese politicians, gambling debts and murderous competition for tourist cocoons.

Two new writers of Japanese crime fiction are Akagawa Jiro and

Noriko, who is trying to forget an unhappy love affair by losing herself on a trip to the mountains. Who is the mystery man with whom she spends a night in a tiny village? The atmosphere of this novel is created through observation of externals rather than psychological insight, and tension is maintained by the neat construction of the whole.

There is little which is distinctively Japanese about the crime fiction which the Tokyo or Osaka "salary man" enjoys, apart from the language in which it is written and the local colour involved. Sex, greed, jealousy and fear are the mainstays of motive, though revenge can also figure, perhaps more largely than in the Western version of the genre. Fictional investigators seem to employ the same mixture of observation, deduction and intuition as their American and European counterparts, and depend just as much on lucky breaks. The Japanese taste, like the British, inclines towards comfortable middle class settings, a notch or two up the social scale from that of the majority of readers, and it is served by writers who are in the main products of that same environment, generally offering a good read.

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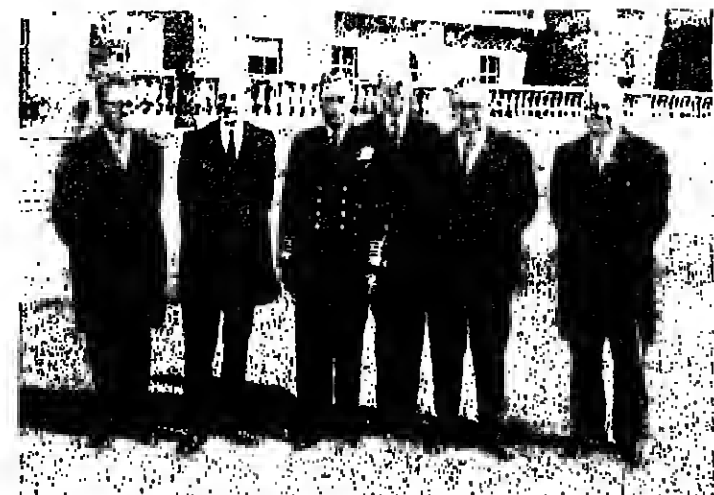
## Loving your class enemies

By Kenneth O. Morgan

Country  
BBC TV

The road to 1945 is well trodden at present. It is common ground between Tony Benn, Denis Healey and the SDP that the Attlee years ushered in some kind of social revolution. Mr Benn hails the hold radical credentials of a democratic socialist government in which his own father was prominent. Dr Owen sees Attlee and his colleagues as launching the Buiskeite Keynesian consensus so rudely disturbed by Thatcherism and Benny today. It is only appropriate that playwrights, too, should offer their own gloss on this supposedly hazy age.

Trevor Griffiths's television play, *Country*, is set against the background of the Labour election landslide in 1945. The Communist Phil Piratin's return for Mile End is faithfully included. Political upheaval is projected against the internal turmoil of a brewing dynasty of suitably distasteful characters, and the desperate efforts of Sir Frederick Carlion (Leo McKern) to secure the succession, as managing director and chairman, for his white-suited black sheep of a son, the homosexual, non-soldiering milohero, Philip (James Fox). There is a measured stillness about the family exchanges deliberately contrasted with on outside world convulsed by social conflict. "The people have declared war on us", one Carlion declares, as revolting Kentish peasants occupy, and then burn down, the family stables and let loose the horses all over the grounds. Even the police are on the side of the common people, up to a point. In the end, predictably enough, Philip triumphs over the man-eating malice of sister-in-law Alice (Jill Bennett), the scepticism of his mother (Wendy Hiller), and the sullen hostility of fellow directors. The Carlions brace themselves to survive, to refloat the "sinking ship" of capitalism, weighed down with rats and plunder. On July



The 1945 Socialist Revolution: King George VI and his Cabinet (left to right: Herbert Morrison, Clement Attlee, the King, Arthur Greenwood, Ernest Bevin and A. V. Alexander) on the terrace of Buckingham Palace.

27, 1945, one day after the deluge, the fight back has begun.

It is easy to see why this superbly-paced production won such instant acclaim from television critics. The interaction of characters is quite gripping. James Fox's wily steeliness as Philip countered by both the death-bed brutality of his father, the disenchanted dotiness of his mother and the carnivorous qualities of his sister-in-law; and Joan Greenwood and Deborah Norton, also shining in a firmament of *déjà* females. Only Virginia (well acted by Penelope Walton), a kind of updated Medusa exiled in France and of Communist inclination, proclaiming the imminent and bloody end of capitalism with "the people banging on the door", does not quite ring true. The direction, concentrating on stylized conversation pieces of Chekhovian quality, is masterly in its control, while Nat Crosby's photography is haunting. It is clear, in fact, that producer, director and cameraman are enchanted by the class enemy. The disintegrating Carlions offer as beguiling a defence of the rotting world of the declining

generacy as does Brideshead on the rival channel. James Fox's Flyte-like stammer and preciosity provide their own justification and charm. They also contribute to exciting and moving television.

Whether any of this bears much relation to the Labour victory in 1945 is quite another matter. Trevor Griffiths seems to take his cue from Evelyn Waugh - "It feels as if we are under enemy occupation". The reality was different, and the Carlions know it already. The inclusion in the play of Labour's election manifesto (with such bloodthirsty proposals as the nationalizing of the Bank of England, which even Churchill supported), the reproduction of Attlee's family-solicitor tones on victory night, telling jubilant Labour voters of the need for discipline and self-sacrifice, show how the Labour triumph was some way short of an apocalypse.

The Carlions, in their country-house cocoon, seem to have been propelled in from another planet, so total is their insulation. The war of 1939-45 apparently never happened

for them, apart from a few tired remarks about injuries at the hands of "Jerry" and incoherent mutterings about India. The social changes of wartime, with their taxes, rationing, Beveridge scheme and evacuees, somehow affected forty million other people, but not them. The fictional background of a popular *jacquerie*, symbolized by besotted, dirty hop-pickers rising up against the beerge, would have been appropriate for 1789 but hardly for the realistic, dogged mood of 1945. But like other historically-based television ventures, this work simply isn't historical.

Nor can it really be claimed to be, in any serious way, social comment or analysis. Mr Griffiths has prefaced his play with radical utterances in the newspapers about the coming social revolution, somewhat loosely defined. "I'm sick of broad churches", he has declared. In fact, his play is largely innocent of Marxism or almost any other variant of socialism. It has nothing to say about class relationships or the economic system. As a Welsh Manxman, Griffiths hates large country houses and idle, parasitical horse gentry, public schools and vicars, adulterous army officers and adulterated beer. So do many of us. On the other hand, as with other purported critics, it is the rich who fascinate him, with their confident ritual and hermetic inaccessibility, the rich who are always with us. Like many another nuck-raker, his tract for the times is inadvertently written in praise of the robber barons. The Marxist playwright, like the New Left dramatist of the "glittering coffin" of the 1960s, is now in some danger of becoming the licensed rebel of the establishment. Instead of the gravedigger of the bourgeoisie, he is the darling of the halls. No more enchanting vision of our inter-capitalist society has been presented than by this socialist propagandist. But then, no more passionate celebration of the virtues of capitalism was ever written than that in *Das Kapital* by the old master himself.

*Country: A Tory Story* is published by Faber (62pp. £3.95 paperback. 0 571 81885 2).

## A ramble with Borrow

By Andrew Motion

George Borrow: a centenary lecture  
Cheltenham Festival of Literature

Eliot praised the Metaphysicals partly because he felt they anticipated his belief that a modern poet had to be "difficult". No dissociation of sensibility prevented him from proposing similarities between his own and the earlier culture. Sometimes it is hard not to feel that the rural revivals of our own day have been made with an eye less to compatibility than to consolation. The recent and genuinely literary interest in the work of writers like Edward Thomas, Richard Jefferies and W. H. Hudson has been accompanied by a good deal of longing for their supposedly better days.

1981 is the centenary of George Borrow's death, so there is good reason for celebrating him. But it is surprising that he has not found a more prominent place on the rural bandwagon before now. Much of his writing exhibits traces of the semi-mystical communion with nature which is fashionable these days, he was the subject of a biography by Edward Thomas, and the good attendance at Enoch Powell's lecture at the Cheltenham Festival testified to considerable public interest, though it was difficult to tell whether in the speaker or the subject. Powell's approach was, unmistakably, a manifestation of the Right Wing for Rural Writers' movement; it evoked the pastoral past of Borrow's England as a golden age, gloomily asking himself and failing to answer:

"Whether the people of England will discover themselves again" and whether, if they do, "their country will still be there for them discover".

The other main reason for Powell's championing of Borrow was immeasurably more attractive. Powell was born in 1912, when Borrow's reputation was enjoying its last spasm of health, and cannot, he said, "remember a time before I knew the works... I could reel off complete slabs from memory." His enthusiasm was initially of his father's making: the family had caught the contemporary craze for walking expeditions - work by Kanō Sanraku, from the Tansu temple in Kyoto which is usually closed to the public; it depicts two enchanting tigers, a cub playing with its mother's tail and,

## commentary

## From the ivory toad to the six-door tiger

By Carmen Blacker

The Great Japan Exhibition  
Art of the Edo Period 1600-1868  
Royal Academy

The planners of this brilliant event doubtless had in mind the need to shatter the stereotyped images of Japan and Japanese art still deplorably prevalent among large sections of the British public. Japanese art, they are insisting, is not confined to the objects brought to this country a century ago, which vitalized and inspired the aesthetic movement of the 1880s and with an odd persistence have governed ever since our taste in matters Japanese. Japanese art between 1600 and 1868 is not confined to woodblock prints, ornamental fans, blue and white china, sword guards, netsuke and Satsuma buttons. Far grander, far more splendid, grave and profound things are to be discovered if once we lift our gaze from the conventional view.

What is provided is a rare and magnificent display of treasures, the like of which has never before been assembled in this country. Some of these exquisite things have never left Japan before. Some come from private collections, including that of the Emperor, and are rarely exposed to the public gaze. All convey a brilliance, a lavishness, a peculiar force rarely experienced in an exhibition and which communicates to us something of the vitality and energy of the period when they were created.

Again, we have always believed that Japanese art was small. We knew that the Japanese could carve a perfect toad and waterlily, for example, on the small piece of ivory necessary to keep a belt in place. We did not realize that they could also create works of a size that even in the large galleries of the Royal Academy appear immense. Thus, most of the treasures in this exhibition are large. There are enormous brilliant screens, hanging scrolls fifteen feet high, perpendicular calligraphy done with a brush apparently the size of a broom.

There are a good many large folding screens of six or eight leaves, which spread out occupy nearly a whole wall. Several depict tigers, magical beasts never seen in the flesh in Japan and known only through Chinese painting and myth. They appear among bamboo groves, for tigers must always be accompanied by bamboo as must lions by peonies. There is the beautiful golden work by Kanō Sanraku, from the Tansu temple in Kyoto which is usually closed to the public; it depicts two enchanting tigers, a cub playing with its mother's tail and,

amidst the bamboo grove with its succulent sprouts, a leopard with quincunx spots. And there is the gigantic tiger by Nagasawa Rosetsu, covering a set of six sliding doors from the Murōji temple in Winkayama, who leaps towards you as you gaze, his paws locked together in a watchspring pounce.

There is a splendid array of hanging paintings, particularly the four by Jakuchū, lent by the Emperor himself. There is an almost visionary brilliance in the white and silver chrysanthemum flowers disposed round a blue winding stream in a manner which is neither representational nor abstract but which conveys the sense of a world of its own; in the thirteen cocks, with their red combs and their magnificent black and white feathers, and in the red maple leaves with two birds, blue and white, perching on the twigs.

There are some black and white paintings by the Zen master Hakuin, who resuscitated Japanese Zen during the eighteenth century; a huge and ferocious face of Daruma with staring eyes and above, in masterly calligraphy, the couplet, "point directly at the heart of man, this very nature is Buddha". And a perpendicular scroll, in huge and terrific calligraphy, the five characters for "one arrow breaks through three barriers".

There is also the kimono. Our own stereotypes here begin in the 1920s, with the lurid and floppy garments incorrectly worn by Noel Coward heroines in their bedrooms. Here is a room of kimono of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which can be considered archetypal, so ingenious are the designs. There is one which is a profusion of pilgrim huts, crosshatched, among maple leaves; another which is a blue river meandering through a parterre of tiny flowers; another which is a cascade of fans intermingled with the cursive script of a poem.

There are two suits of armour, one said to have been worn by the Shōgun Yoshimune, with an immense helmet crested with a golden dragon and a neck guard in seven layers. And a *kago* or ceremonial palanquin, made for the wedding of the Shōgun Tsunayoshi in 1664, all gold lacquer bamboo and hollyhocks, and a small grille window through which its august occupant could look out.

At first glance there is a curious absence of religious art, not a single bodhisattva, not one esoteric mandala. But probably the planners thought we knew about bronze Buddhas. Instead they give us twelve astonishing wooden figures by the ascetic wandering monk Enkō. Enkō belonged to a religious order whose members were vowed to homelessness. For most of their lives they



The English as seen by the Japanese in the mid nineteenth century: a couple with an umbrella by Utagawa Yashitora, and a soldier by Ippōsei Yoshifusa. Both come from the exhibition reviewed here and are illustrated in its catalogue, edited by William Watson (365 pp. Royal Academy / Weidenfeld and Nicolson. Paperback £5.95 in the exhibition. £9.95 from bookshops. 0 297 78035 2. Hardback £17.50 from bookshops only. 0 297 78027 1). The catalogue is richly illustrated and includes essays on Japan's politics and foreign relations in the period by W. G. Beasley, on its social and economic history by Masahide Bito, and on its art by William Watson.

wandered throughout Japan, reciting sutras, eating only the products of trees and posing only for excruciatingly cold sojourns in remote caves. Some of them left behind them as they travelled a trail of carved wooden Buddhas, but no one else shows the genius of Enkō. His figures have a special archaic smile, an otherworldly joyousness. The stiff stand-up air now recalls the feathers of some being from another plane. They were not carved in a warm comfortable workshop, but probably

in an icy and inaccessible cave high in the mountains. Only circumstances such as these account for the weird and uncanny power which the figures generate.

These carved figures, set in the midst of the golden screens and scrolls which embellished the mansions of *dahnyō*, remind us that there were still men in Japan at this time dedicated to an altogether different way of life and to the spiritual quest. They too produced things of beauty.

## Dramatic disunities

By Alan Jenkins

The Molds  
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

It's unlikely that Jean Genet took his measure from Jean Racine; but in *The Molds* it may not be inappropriate to detect a Racinean element, albeit inverted. Racine's tragic figures suffer under an intolerable burden of silence, of self-restraint; desiring the impossible, they are forced to express the unutterable. Since their every actual utterance is governed by the formal constraints imposed by the alexandrine couplet, Racine had no need to do more than hint at other kinds of constraint: confinement, enforced reticence and the oppressive weight of the unsaid are built into his dramatic unities and the movement of his lines. Some months ago a remarkable production in English of *Briandine* at the Lyric Studio managed to convey this brooding, oppressive intensity, and with it the essential force and beauty of Racinean tragedy, by adopting the ceremonious, sometimes deliberately awkward movement of the English taximeter line as the basis of the translation. Now the same theatre's production of *The Molds*, directed by Clare Davidson, reveals a Genet who is all too easily lost or obscured by being subjected to well-meaning academic interest or general "acceptance".

*The Molds* is outrageous to conception, direct in execution. Solange and Claire also are constrained by their existences as molds, and because they are locked in a self-punishing cycle of mutual dependence, need and barely-suppressed hatred - feelings which are transferred, too, to their all-dominating, lecherous and seduced Madame. But they, unlike Racine's characters, are condemned to express everything; and to re-enact endlessly their erotic pantomime which mounts steadily and

hopelessly towards a perpetually deferred, inaccessible climax. The ultimate in sexual "role-playing", their sado-masochistic performances are also the only opportunity they have to be themselves - such selves as remain to them, twisted out of recognition by the systematic removal of every freedom. Deprived of identity - or more than this, of subjectivity - they rediscover an "existence" only in play-acting, in the rehearsal of desire and self-abnegation.

This bizarre and painful relation of master/mistress, slave/mold is complicated and enriched, in this production, by the casting of male actors in all three female roles, in accordance with Genet's original wishes for the play. Exaggeratedly "feminine" in their every gesture and inflection, the two drag-artist maids cajole, bully and seduce each other towards a murder and/or suicide that is the only possible escape from (and co-ordination of) their despair; their mistress, flamboyantly heartless, the ever-present though unseen Monsieur, effortlessly, unknowingly confirming every signal which denies them a right to live. The play is revitalized as an exploration of the condition of the servant, of its incessant and intolerable contradictions: extremes of "luxury and filth", sainthood and criminality.

It is also, in the performances of Raad Rawi (pouting and swallowing back the soba perhaps a shade too often), the waspish and sinister John Dicks, and the seductively glamorous Mark Rylance, an exploration (as Sartre long ago pointed out, as Lacan would have recognized, and as the general existential psychoanalytical emphasis of the production makes abundantly clear) of every shade overt and implicit, transsexual being only the most obvious - of "deviant" sexuality; of what it is like to desire above everything else to be something you cannot be. This is a fiercer, more claustrophobic, and, curiously, a more humane *Molds* than most.

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## The Booker Prize: matters of judgment

By Hermione Lee

A small flurry of publicity surrounded the final stages of this year's Booker McConnell prize. It did little for the standing of Britain's most prestigious award for fiction, but it raised some interesting questions. Should the judging procedures for such a prize be confidential? Do the British media give the right sort of attention to literary prizes? Does this major award do any good apart from the prizewinner's cheque to novelists, as opposed to publishers, judges, Booker McConnell and the National Book League? Does the British public read more novels, or pay more attention to fiction, because of this prize? Local issues were raised, too. Was one of the judges, who looked over deliberations in mid-course, opportunistically cashing in on his role? Were his agent, and the literary editor of the *Guardian*, who printed his revelations, acting unscrupulously? Should the NBL have acted more firmly to prevent him?

The gossip whiffled spread after the announcement of the short-list was taken from various quarters. The *Bookmaker's* columnist Quentin Oates suggested that the short-list represented a failure to reach a consensus, a motley collection of unreconciled preferences. *Private Eye*, which has it in for what it calls "the idiotic Booker Prize", said that Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers* was only there because Malcolm Bradbury, the chairman, had taught him, and that Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* would win (as it did) because novels set in India regularly win Britain's top literary awards.

Brian Aldiss's detailed and highly personal account of our judging procedure celebrated the high quality of the year's novels, praised several of the "near-misses", and lamented the media's lack of interest. But it also gave the impression that our discussions were arbitrary, named some of the novels disliked, and implied, wrongly, that McEwan had been slipped onto the short list at the last moment. This rumour had hardened into "fact" by the time Hunter Davies covered the prize in *The Times* the day before the announcement, and was repeated by Robert Kee ("we also know that Ian McEwan's book only just scraped onto the short list") during the BBC's televising of the award. Aldiss claimed that the list rejected large ambitious novels in favour of slight "anorexic" ones, and he revealed his unhappiness with three of the short-listed novels.

Bradbury responded with a reproving letter to the *Guardian*, regretting the breach of confidentiality and praising the short-list in his own critical terms: "All are genuinely self-conscious fictions, doing what good novels should: advancing and inquiring into our awareness of how we name and structure our fictions and our so-called truths." Outside the book pages, the British press finds it hard to take literary controversy seriously, and *The Sunday Times* lapsed into a trivialising report ("But Malcolm didn't like it. Secrets were secret", etc) which printed a list it called "THE RUNNERS-UP" of seven novels (which had certainly not been liked by all the judges), and predicted D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* as the winner. Aldiss wrote the following week to make it clear that "THE RUNNERS-UP" were only his runners-up (and, in fact, this list of his had changed since our meetings). Hilary Rubinstein, Aldiss's agent, suggested in a letter to *The Sunday Times* that the judges' deliberations should be broadcast or televised.

Some false impressions have arisen from all this, and the record needs to be put straight on certain points. Ian McEwan's novel, admired by four of the five judges, was constantly brought in when the short-list was being selected. Bradbury made his personal connection clear, this was discussed and, as far as was humanly possible, set aside. Rushdie is not the winner because his novel is set in India (though, obviously, it is a country which has inspired much considerable fiction) but because it is a magnificent novel about India. The

short-list was not biased towards slight books (Rushdie and Lessing would not have been there if it had been) but towards novels which were as good as they could be within their own terms.

Our procedures were conscientious. Over the summer we read seventy-three novels, and these involved every imaginable genre: thrillers, historical and regional novels, sea stories, school novels, novels about the writing of novels, science-fiction, fairy tales, realist documents, "post-modernist" soliloquies and political fables. My greatest difficulty, and the source of my deepest uncertainty about the value of the whole undertaking, was in having to compare works of such entirely different kinds. But it was also a source of satisfaction that the term "novel" is being persistently re-defined.

In a succession of meetings, during which we discussed every one of the seventy-three, we narrowed the list down to a "long" list of under twenty. These were strongly supported by at least two, and usually more than two, of the judges. This list was a rich and interesting mixture of distinguished writers (Nadine Gordimer, Brian Moore, Michael Moorcock) and of little-known or relatively new novelists. With the former, we had to distinguish carefully our sense of the writer's whole *opus* from our judgments of this year's novel. With the latter, we had to be wary of exaggerating the claims of a novel because it felt like a new discovery. Our decisions about the short-list were taken regardless of previous short-lists or of established reputations; and we were looking for a winner that would be, as the chairman put it, "a book that should be read in twenty years' time". There was strong support among the judges (this is now no secret) for, in alphabetical order, John Banville's *Kepler*, William Boyd's *A Good Man in Africa*, Maggie Gee's *Dying in Other Words*, Nadine Gordimer's *Juicy's People*, Alan Hollinghurst's *Life and Times of the Great Divorced*, Michael Moorcock's *Byzantium Erudites*, Christopher Priest's *Affirmation*, Piers Paul Read's *The Villa Goliath*, Graham Swift's *Shutout*, and A. N. Wilson's *Who Was Oswald Fish?* Of all the novels which we regretfully set aside, Brian Moore's *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* came closest to the short-list. But, as Bradbury said in his *Guardian* letter, our discussions were not just a matter of votes and lists.

Not only because it made our procedures sound dismissive and gave ammunition to the "idiotic Booker prize" school of thought, but for other reasons too, Aldiss's article did no good (though this was the opposite of his intention) to the novelists of the prize. It was not helpful to single out novels we had all disliked. Some of our publishers certainly seemed ill-advised as to their submissions, but the novelists should not have to suffer for that. It was improper to disclose which of the short-listed novels he disliked: surely any committee judges, in spite of inevitable differences, should try to produce an agreed result? And, simply, it was a breach of faith: confidentiality had been required of all the judges. It might in future need to be required: in writing, and payment of the prize, the judge's fee might be condition upon its being maintained.

But why confidentiality? I had already reviewed some of the novels in the *Observer*, and that situation of a judge wearing another hat as a reviewer is bound to arise again. And doesn't secrecy of any kind always fuel the kind of gossip I have described, and which has arisen before in connection with this and other prizes? What of the case for openness?

My own view is that judging a literary prize is not like writing a review or taking part in a broadcast discussion. The point is not that, behind closed doors, judges will tell scurrilous stories about the ovelles (or, their own) secret lives — though, naturally, if no one is thought to be taking notes under the table, jokes will be made and prejudices will be

aired. But persuasion and argument, as well as the delivering of critical opinions, are in process. The judges must be able to feel that they can speak freely, that they needn't measure their words, that they can change their minds, or be rude about a book they feel is being overpraised, or even admit that they haven't been able to finish a book, and be sent away to try again. That level of honesty can't, I think, be maintained if the discussion is taking place in public, or is going to be made public. Confidentiality protects the judges from pressure: persuasion could be brought to bear on a judge known to be teetering on the brink of a final choice. Confidentiality (as with job selection committees) protects the "candidate" from unnecessary pain. No novelist wants to have derogatory opinions bruited about because they are not on the short-list of a prize for which they did not even enter themselves.

Most importantly, if the short-list discussions were to be published or broadcast, attention would focus on the judges rather than the novelists. No one could resist wanting to appear wittier, more authoritative, more sympathetic than their colleagues. And public judgment on the discussions would inevitably be distorted, unless everyone who followed them had also read all the seventy or so novels submitted for the prize. More good — crudely, more sales — would come of interviews with winners and short-listed novelists, of broadcast or televised discussions of the final list, and of paperback editions resulting from the nominations. This is, after all, Britain's only major literary award. It is a prize which matters. It does make a great difference to one novelist every year. It does increase sales, it does attract attention to fiction in Britain, and it ought to be taken seriously. This year alone, the range, the excellence and the unexpectedness of the nominations are very exciting: these novels ought to be read widely, not only by the winners.

Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour* (Deutsch) — again, I am keeping to alphabetical order — marked the return of an Anglo-Irish writer, now in her seventies, who between 1928 and 1961 wrote novels and plays under the pseudonym M. J. Farrell. Aaron St Charles narrates the story of her "Big House" childhood — marvellously recorded — with a self-absorbed imperceptiveness which, gradually, makes it appear that this is much more than a witty, accomplished piece of Anglo-Irish nostalgia. It is a novel about neglect and revenge, which sinisterly and brilliantly undermines its own conventions.

*The Siron Experiments* (Cape) is the third in Doris Lessing's "novel-sequences" *Canopus in Argos: Archives*, though it can be read in isolation. It is narrated by Ambien II, a (female) public official who slowly begins to understand, over the millennia spanned by the book, the ways in which society — particularly a colonizing society — really works, and the hidden patterns which control human behaviour. Though Lessing's writing is clumsy and laborious — she uses prose as a wheelbarrow in which she trundles around her ideas — and her insistent polemical methods can't be to everyone's taste, she has the scientist's power of making things at once strange and familiar, and she is without question stretching the capacities of the English novel.

*The Comfort of Strangers* (Cape) is Ian McEwan's second novel, spare, cool and alarming, which places a young middle-class English couple, on holiday to Venice (though the city is made strange by being unnamed), in an extreme situation which seems inevitably to take them over and to enact everything they have suppressed in their own indecisive, inarticulate, liberal relationship. The short novel proceeds with an extraordinary combination of stillness and speed, inertia and violence, as though it were a series of film shots in which the city and the couple are "framed". McEwan's novel incorporates (though it's not centrally con-

cerned with) a feminist argument; a brutal, paternalistic Mediterranean family tradition is described, in a brilliant story-within-the-story, as a threat to the half-achieved ideal of sexual equality which the English couple try to discuss.

There is also, in a very different way, a muted feminism underlying Ann Schlee's quiet, elegant, exact novel *Rhine Journey*. This very subtle sets in a historical framework — an English family "doing" the Rhine in 1851 — the confined existence, the struggle for independence and the sexual fantasies of an unmarried woman in her late thirties. Her name is Charlotte, and the novel lavishly invokes Charlotte, Brontë's *Villette*. But to describe this as merely a delicate period piece is not enough: the workings of Charlotte's imagination are deep and unsettling.

Muriel Spark's *Loitering with Intent*, stylish, cold, funny, self-celebrating, gleeful, is a glibful fable about writing, autobiography and censorship. Fleur Tabor, used by and using the "evil" Sir Quentin and his motley group of "Autobiographers Anonymous", tells you what it felt like to be an independent woman in the literary London of the 1950s (this too is a kind of historical novel) and what the novelist should be up to: "without a mythology, a novel is nothing."

D. M. Thomas is a profound myth-maker, and his highly original and disturbing novel which was a close runner-up to the winner, *The White Hotel* (Collins), part poem, part fantasy, part Freudian psychoanalytical study, pursues the symbolism of the unconscious with extraordinary imagination and precision. Freud's methods of uncovering layer upon layer of his "subject" are also used by the novel, which leads the reader from the erotic fantasies of a half-Russian, half-Jewish Viennese opera singer, to the massacre of the Jews at Babi Yar. Thomas's novel is intricately organized, structured in sections and motifs become only gradually apparent. To compare *The White Hotel* with *Midnight's Children* is to compare two radically different kinds of modern fiction: the former essentially belongs to a formal, controlled, literary tradition in which the writer disappears behind masks; the latter, a huge, verbose, arm-tugging narrative, is bursting with the presence of the writer at play.

The analogies for Rushdie are part English (Sterne, Fielding), part cosmopolitan (Günter Grass, Gabriel García Márquez). Rushdie's narrator Saleem calls himself a "modernist elephantiasis", and his twentieth-century Indian epic, at once wildly fantastical and in grim political earnest, is mixed and spiced like Saleem's own bottles of chutney.

That the prize was won by a novel about India points to the current adventuring of English-language fictions. I first read Salman Rushdie in an extract from *Midnight's Children* printed in the February edition of the magazine *Granta*, alongside passages from Russell Hoban, Emma Tennant, Angela Carter and other writers who through linguistic brio and a passion for myth, fantasy, folklore, magic, are invading the novel with a fresh, strange language. Reading for the Booker prize leaves me haunted by a hundred images, not found before, 'oot to be the le-habits of the dark city of Unkank in *Lanark*; the institution in *The Affirmation* where immortality is forced upon the imprisoned prize-winner; Kepler drawing among his cups of the world's perfect order; Brian Moore's rich, middle-aged businessman running, beside himself with love, through the ad ordinariness of a London park; the terrible falling of bodies seen from the windows of the white hotel; a perforated sheet through which, piece by piece, a Kashmiri doctor falls in love with his future wife... It has been, for all its irritations and demands, a great feast, a treat, a passionately interesting job.

## Marie Curie

Sir, — In his perceptive review of Françoise Giloud's *Une femme honnête* (October 9), Eugen Weber reaches correct conclusions concerning Marie Curie's emergence as a scientific figure of some consequence. If Marie Curie has become a heroine of the feminist cause, it has not been of her making. She expected no concessions to her sex, but she was not affronted when she received any. She found no difficulty in treating her contemporaries in chemistry and physics as equals. Those who knew her well (and Ernest Rutherford was certainly one) had no doubts that her contribution to the identification and separation of polonium and radium was equal to that of Pierre Curie.

It is nevertheless noteworthy that those who knew her less well automatically assumed that, being a woman, she must have played a role inferior to her husband. The prejudicial legend still persists. One historian from Mr Weber's own University of California has suggested that the achievement was the result of Pierre's brilliant mind — along with a useful contribution from Marie's hands.

I have looked for, and failed to find, any evidence to support the view that in the work (with Becquerel) far which they were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize, Pierre Curie played the dominant scientific role. All available evidence suggests, particularly to anybody who has worked in a collaborative role in a laboratory, that their work — as a physicist, she as chemist — was complementary and that the equal apportionment of honour was just.

But what cannot be denied is the extraordinary circumstance of the award in 1911 of the second Nobel Prize to Marie Curie alone. No amount of permutation of the words in which the prize was couched can alter the fact that she was given the award twice for the same work.

Far from showing prejudice against the sole distinguished woman in their group, her male scientific colleagues reacted so strongly against her rejection by the Académie des Sciences and by the press campaign which exposed her affair with the physicist Paul Langevin that, for the first time in the award's history,

they thrust a second Nobel medal her way. The swell of sympathy had occurred simply because she was a woman.

There is no real evidence that the work she had done since 1902, though of high quality, was either so original or so exceptional as to merit her glittering prize. On the other hand, there is no reason to suspect that she thought other than it was richly deserved.

ROBERT REID,  
50 Westcroft Square, London W8 6TA.

## Pushkin and Lermontov

Sir, — I am not doubting that the Neva, like all great rivers, pulses. The point I was trying to make in my review of Sir Charles Johnston's new book (October 2) was that any attempt to find equivalent feminine rhymes, in English, for Pushkin's austere masterpiece, *The Bronze Horseman*, was bound to sound strained at times. Sir Charles needed a rhyme for "creation": since he is a sensitive poet, he found a truthful word: I cannot think that there is a better. Yet the reader cannot but be conscious of the translator's skill and effort (especially as "pulsation" is preceded by an archaic syllable in "majestic"), to achieve the tetrameter. "Neva's majestic flow" is inevitably sacrificed, for an "exact" metrical equivalent; and I question whether the cost is not too high, in this particular instance. Rhymes and metre are not as close to the inner core of *The Bronze Horseman* as they are in *Eugene Onegin*, so marvellously translated by Sir Charles. In the art of translation, as he knows as well as any, it is always a question of balancing gains and losses. I say again that his is the best metrical version of the great Russian poem that I have read.

GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI,  
60 Prince Edward's Road, Lewes, Sussex.

*Last Poet* is its consistently high quality.

D. M. THOMAS,  
10 Greyfriars Avenue, Hereford.

## George Perec

Sir, — I was delighted to read John Sturrock's enthusiastic review of the new OULIPO publication (October 16). Sturrock refers to George Perec's splendid novel, *La Disparition*, but he makes no mention of Perec's masterpieces to date, *La Vie mode d'emploi*, which came out in 1978. This book seems to me to be, if anything, finer than *Ulysses*, certainly in the same class. It won the Prix Femina in France, but my rather half-hearted attempts to interest English publishers in it have so far proved unsuccessful. This is hardly surprising since the book runs to over 650 pages, and would need at least a combination of Anthony Burgess and Ralph Manheim to translate, but it is a great pity that it is not better known over here, even by those who profess an interest in French literature.

PATRICK O'CONNOR,  
26 Sheen Park, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UW.

## 'The Projection of Britain'

Sir, — In his review of Philip M. Taylor's book on British propaganda between the wars, *The Projection of Britain*, Stephen Koss criticizes the British government for "making scarcely any attempt to clarify much less defend, official policies in Northern Ireland".

One has to ask how Professor Koss has managed to overcome the Official Secrets Act as to be in possession of facts upon which to base this observation? From personal experience I can repeat what has been printed elsewhere that during 1969 to 1973, when I was head of a political radio news section in the Central Office of Information, I worked regularly to the brief of the British Information Services. Now Professor Koss states his never been produced. This involved regular transmission of brief, newsy items of "the man in the news, telling the news" in under sixty seconds, whether that man was the Prime Minister, Defence Secretary, Catholic priest or peace-worker. Often the material was also filmed but, because there were no satellite methods of dealing with television news film in the BIS New York offices, this material was often outdated by the time it arrived. I was also in a position to observe times when British government personnel visited American editorial offices to explain British policy in Ulster and the subsequent appearance, in the *New York Times* and *The Christian Science Monitor*, of carefully worded editorial appraisals of British policy in Ulster.

I did not mean to suggest that I thought Marie Duplessis had syphilis, merely that I learned that she was the disease prostitute (whether they called themselves courtesans or mythic thing else) were more prone to than the more polite, but no less fatal tuberculosis.

RICHARD USBORNE,  
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The illustrations on the cover this week are by Will Bradley (left) and Gustav Klimt (right) and are taken from Siegfried Wichmann's *Japanism: The Japanese Influence on Western Art Since 1858* (432pp with 1,105 illustrations. Thames and Hudson, £30, 0 500 23341 1) which is published this week and which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

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## Among this week's contributors

G. C. ALLEN is Emeritus Professor of Political Economy at the University of London. His *The Japanese Economy, 1981*, is reviewed in this issue.

LOUIS ALLEN's books include *Sitting, 1914*, and *The End of the War in Africa, 1914*.

HAROLD BRAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

QUINTIN BALL's books include *Ruskin, 1963*, and *Virginia Woolf: a Biography, 1972*.

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CARMEN BLACKER is a lecturer in Japanese at the University of Cambridge. Her books include *The Colop- low, 1975*.

GORDON DANIELS is Senior Lecturer in Modern Far Eastern History at the University of Sheffield.

RONALD DORE's most recent book is *Shinohira: a Portrait of a Japanese Village, 1979*.

C. J. DUNN is Professor of Japanese at the School of Oriental and African Studies and President of the European Association for Japanese Studies.

D. J. ENRIGHT's recent collections of poems include *A Faust Book, 1978*.

JULIE HANKEV's theatre-historical edition of *Richard III* was published earlier this year.

JEREMY HARDIE is Vice-Chairman of the Monopolies Commission.

SAMUEL HYNES's books include *The Auden Generation, 1976*.

FRANCIS KING's most recent book is a collection of short stories, *Indirect Method, 1980*.

JAMES KIRKUP teaches Comparative Literature at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

HEMIONA LEE's *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

JEAN-PIERRE LEHMANN is a lecturer in History at the University of Stirling.

FOSCO MARAINI's books include *L'isola delle pescatrici, 1960*, and *Japan: Patterns of Continuity, 1971*.

GEORGEY MARSHALL's books include *Constitutional Theory, 1971*.

JAMES MELVILLE's most recent oration novel is *A Sort of Somnolence, 1981*.

KENNETH O. MORRIS's *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* was published earlier this year.

BLAKE MORRISON is Deputy Literary Editor of *The Observer*. His critical study *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* was published last year.

ANDREW MORRISON's new long poem, *Independence*, will be published next month.

SUNGE OKADA, formerly a teacher at the Woman's College in Tokyo, is a graduate student at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

BRIAN POWELL is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He is completing a study of the modern Kabuki playwright, Mayama Seika.

CHRISTOPHER REID's collection of poems, *Arcadio*, was published in 1979.

ORAHAM REYNOLDS is preparing a complete catalogue of the works of John Constable (1817-1837).

EDWARD SELOENSTICKER's books include his translation of *The Tale of Genji, 1976*, *Genji Days, 1977*, and *This Country: Japan, 1979*.

KEVIN SHARPE is the author of *Sir Robert Cotton: History and Politics in Early Modern England, 1980*.

PETER SINGER is the author of *Animal Liberation, 1976*.

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BLAIR WOODMAN is the author of *The Rump Parliament 1648-1653, 1974*.



# A nose for war

By Frank Tuohy

TAKESHI KAIKO:  
Into a Black Sun  
214pp. Tokyo: Kodansha. Yen 2300.  
0 87011 428 X

Early on in *Into a Black Sun* the journalist-narrator is telling an American army officer about Japanese writing. He explains the use of three different kinds of script: "The writer weaves the three like strands of rope to construct a sentence." Then, he says, there is the business of choosing between numerous personal pronouns: "The choice of the 'I' form can determine the tone of the work. This is a difficult point, one that no other country's writers have to contend with."

It is true that in current English - apart from the royal "we", the affected "one" and perhaps the Hemingwayesque "you" - there is only one pronoun for the first person singular. But this does not solve the problem of the tone of the work. Writers of travel books provide a variety of examples: the "I" might be one of those self-admiring pronouns on the old *Blackwood's Magazine*, who knew more about the natives than they knew themselves; or a quasi-avuncular scholar, like Norman Douglas; or, in our own day, an observer who is just and unobtrusive, like V. S. Naipaul. Novelists experience a similar difficulty: Anthony Trollope told an apprentice novelist that, if she used the first person, she would be accused of self-esteem. Modern novelists are apt to become awkward when describing their hero's sexual exploits.

They order these things differently in Japan, where there is a tradition of autobiographical fiction and the observer has no problems in observing himself. Whatever synonym for "I" Takeshi Kaiko chose, his translator has served him well. *Into a Black Sun* is an excellent example of that special sensibility which Japanese readers find deficient in American and British novels, the hunger for the visible and palpable, the slightly myopic craving for detail that is either resonant or significant. A western reader will find no awkwardness in accompanying this witness to the brothels and eating-houses of Saigon in 1964, or the battlefields of the surrounding countryside.

*Into a Black Sun* was written in 1968, but appears only now in translation. It refers to a period in history which American readers, at least, will wish to forget. As a work of fiction it functions without narrative conflict, tensions or surprises of plotting, and yet the final effect is of a coherent work of art. At the same time it provides a picture of the relationship between Vietnamese and Americans which seems all the more authentic in that it comes from an Asian witness.

Takeshi Kaiko is aware of the similarities between the destruction of Japan in 1945 and what is going on in 1964. But there is no *schadenfreude*. In fact his consciousness of the tragic absurdity of events becomes clear to him only when he reads Mark Twain's *Comedies*. "We'd known the outcome all along," he says, "from the time the war was over." Nevertheless, he himself moves from being the ingenuous spectator, "clinging to a precarious neutrality... allowing the curse of elitism, of pallid intellectualism, to follow even this far" until the final chapter when he goes out on a patrol that is almost annihilated by the Viet Cong.

In the conversation about writing between the journalist-narrator and the American army officer, the narrator says: "If I write about anything, it'll be about smells." The American asks: "Shouldn't literature be about one's mission in life rather than smells?" No, he is told, the interpretation of man's purpose changes with time. Smells don't.

## Mo-girl watching

By Francis King

TAYAMA KATAI:  
The Quilt and Other Stories  
Translated by Kenneth G. Henshall  
204pp. University of Tokyo Press.  
Yen 2800.  
0 86008 254 7

Just as in the Meiji Era the Japanese took over from the West countless inventions, institutions and customs, so, less obtrusively, their intelligentsia tended to appropriate Western identities to replace ones that all these sudden and momentous innovations had either eroded or totally dissolved. Typical of this process was Tayama Katai (1871-1930), one of the pioneers of European Naturalism, a selection of whose short-stories has now appeared in an English translation by Kenneth G. Henshall.

In his account in his memoirs of the genesis of the longest work here included, "The Quilt", Katai wrote: "Just at that time I was deeply moved, mind and body, by Gerhart Hauptmann's *Einsame Menschen*. I felt that Vockerat's loneliness was my own... Tolstoy, Ibsen, Strindberg, Nietzsche - in the ideology of such writers I felt that the *fin-de-siècle* distress appeared clearly. I felt I too would like to suffer in my turn."

In the Hauptmann story, the intellectual Vockerat, bored and irritated by his dim and conventional wife, falls in love with the girl student who comes to lodge with them. As though in a deliberate effort to

Certainly smells, gaud, bud and disgusting, play a large part in this narrative. But so also do innumerable other touches of description, the laundered shirts hanging on the gun barrels of Vietnamese tanks, "the leeked-tin taste of air-conditioning", the rooms that are "candle-lit" in the dark walls, the lines of bicycles that go on coming into town, loaded with mounds of flowers, when the war is only a few miles away.

Most telling, perhaps, of all Takeshi Kaiko's descriptions are those that deal with the encounters between the Vietnamese and their allies. He remembers how the same blue eyes and flaming cheeks "He observes the young soldiers clustering around to watch an American shaving or look at the hair on his chest, or 'yelp with embarrassment when Qis hung around bare-assed after a shower'. In Saigon he sees Vietnamese girls 'flirting like kittens, but though their mouths laughed and their white teeth flashed, their eyes were cold'. At one significant moment, a Viet-

namese soldier is cleaning a machine gun, when an American adviser comes over to help him.

His arms went limp and his chin dropped as though he'd fallen into an air-pocket that left him blind and deaf. Haines continued to talk, but the Vietnamese put down his screwdriver and walked away... There are insects and animals that suddenly turn over and feign death when chased into a corner by a stronger enemy.

In the dark chaos of Saigon, he mnages to keep the picture in focus. A group of writers meets to listen to an open letter to André Malraux, a parody of muddle and illogic; later, other letters are to be addressed to Refie Char, Henry Miller, Martin Luther King. While a Japanese colleague experiences the dubious pleasure of a "licking house", the narrator forms a relationship with a girl refugee from North Vietnam. Her brother, who works as an interpreter, is conscripted, despite chopping off some fingers. When the Japanese journalists bid him farewell, he murmurs a condemnation of Westerners: "They

pretend to sympathize, but they're all here for the thrill of it... Nobody sympathizes with us because if they did they couldn't bear this country for another day."

*Into a Black Sun* presents a vivid and intimate picture, but it may finally be a tendentious one. Living in Tokyo in the 1960s, I remember the reaction to early photographs from the war in Indo-China: shock, not at the horrors depicted, but at their publication. Ordinary people should not be shown such things. At the same time - the 1964 Olympics had an influence here - there was a somewhat self-conscious effort towards humanism, at showing the Japanese people as members of the brotherhood of man. *Into a Black Sun* demonstrates this, while continuing to insist that all Westerners - Graham Greene is dragged in for a mention - had to be wrong about Vietnam. Possibly, but it was not necessary to be a Westerner to be wrong about what was going on. The following year I watched a Japanese business man carrying a bag of golf-clubs into the People's Republic of China.

Japanese category of "Watakushi fiction" or - as Mori Ogai, who lived in Germany from 1884 to 1888, termed it - *Ich roman*. The narrator is, to all intents and purposes, the novelist himself, whose chief excitement in life is to fantasize about the women crowded around him on the trains on which he commutes back and forth to a boring job. Eventually, in a particularly packed compartment, he becomes so absorbed in the contemplation of one wholly outstanding specimen that he is pushed out on to the line in the crush and is killed. Many people must have all but suffered the same fate on Japanese commuter-trains - even if not as a punishment for voyeurism.

Since Katai took himself, perpetually yearning and perpetually frustrated, with so much solemnity, there is often an unconscious humour in his incessant spinning of a fine thread of narrative out of his own emotional antrils. The best example

of this is "The Girl-Watcher", an account of a man as dissatisfied with his literary career and his marriage as Katal himself, whose chief excitement in life is to fantasize about the women crowded around him on the trains on which he commutes back and forth to a boring job. Eventually, in a particularly packed compartment, he becomes so absorbed in the contemplation of one wholly outstanding specimen that he is pushed out on to the line in the crush and is killed. Many people must have all but suffered the same fate on Japanese commuter-trains - even if not as a punishment for voyeurism.

Kenneth G. Henshall has produced an excellent introduction, at once informative and sympathetic; but his translations sometimes lack the qualities of lucidity and grace that the Japanese praise in Katai's style.

## Tokyo technicolour yawn

By T. J. Blynon

ROGER FULVERS:  
The Death of Urashima Taro  
122pp. Angus and Robertson. £4.95.  
0 267 14053 7

This novel by an Australian author, playwright, broadcaster, translator and theatre director comes with the equivalent of a government health warning on its dust jacket, where it's billed as an "anti-thriller... both a parody of a thriller and a true thriller at the same time": a description calculated to make a corpse-like pal-

lor invade the countenance of the strongest reader.

Haro-narrator Ron is in Tokyo, trying to put together a joint Japanese-Australian television production about the mass escape of Japanese prisoners of war from an Australian prison-camp in 1944. The project picks the ash off an old, still appurposing wound: Ron finds himself confronted with a bland Oriental wall, and is soon putting to himself a number of questions such as: "Who killed Inomate Bunzaemon? How was N.H.K. mixed up in all this? What was the relationship between Tsunoda Masahiro and Inomate Kenji? How did Mokuba Jotaro fit in?" To the simple-minded these

questions might seem to be of the kind which have answers, but such is not the case here. Indeed, the whole intrigue is densely impenetrable throughout, even though the author tells the story twice over - slightly sharp, commercial practice in a novel of only 120 pages.

Partly responsible for the thick fog which enshrouds the story is the author's over-gaudy narrative technique. A movie is built up of unrelated fragments of description or dialogue; here and there glitters a bold neologism: "I was vomitous". Ron pathetically remarks at one point, referring, presumably, to what Barry Mackenzie used to describe as a technicolour yawn.

As part of their series of paperback translations of twentieth-century Japanese fiction, Kodansha International have reissued Masaji Inoue's *Solamander* and *Other Stories* (160pp. 0 87011 458 1), a collection of historical fictions translated by Edward Seidensticker and James T. Araki; Fumiko Enchi's novel *The Wobbling Years* (203pp. 0 87011 424 7), in which she examines the attitudes of modern Japanese women and for which, in 1957, she received the Noma prize; *The Doctor's Wife* (174pp. 0 87011 465 4), by Sawako Ariyoshi, the novelist and playwright well-known in Japan for her treatment of social problems such as pollution and the care of old people in contemporary society; and *The Catch and Other War Stories* (154pp. 0 87011 457 3), four stories, selected and introduced by Shôichi Sakai, on the impact of the Pacific War on Japanese civilians. Other recent paperback reissues from Kodansha International include John Bester's translation of Saburo Shiroyama's *War Criminal: Life and Death of Hiroie Koki* (209pp. 0 87011 368 2).

## Bashô Travelling

Nine days to Ichiburi  
up and down  
with sweat and dysentery...

Awake all night with the bugs  
biting mid the horse  
plasing in my ear.

No sleep again  
trying not to hear the whores  
whispering through the wall.

Arriving home  
one's own gate is like something  
remembered from a dream

David Lindley

## Edmund Blunden and his 'Dearest Autumn'

By Sumie Okada

For the history of Anglo-Japanese literary relations there has lately been a kind of some interest. This is a large number of letters - more than a thousand - written by Edmund Blunden to Aki Hayashi, a Japanese woman teacher whom he met when he was himself teaching in Tokyo. The correspondence covers a span of more than thirty years, and reveals much about Blunden's hopes and activities as a poet and teacher, about his own literary projects, and his impressions of Japan and Japanese. It is at times touchingly intimate. Blunden sent poems to Miss Hayashi, often written in Japanese vein, and was closest to her at the time he was meditating and beginning to write his classic account of his experiences in the First World War, *Undertones of War*. The letters reveal much about his mind and thoughts and his character, which always seemed to his Japanese friend peculiarly and delightfully English.

Having accompanied Blunden back to England when he returned from his first professional post in 1927, Miss Hayashi settled in London with his encouragement and support. He helped her with money, and she was also able to earn her own living by doing research for him and other writers, including Graham Greene and George Orwell. Her work at the British Museum was of substantial help to Blunden in his researches on Keats and Shelley, and he generously acknowledges this in his letters. She was also able to assist him unobtrusively when he joined the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Before her death in 1962 Miss Hayashi had become a British citizen. She never went back to Japan.

A small, plain, serious girl, Aki Hayashi first met Blunden in 1924 at the Summer College in Koriyama. Blunden had been invited to Tokyo Imperial University (Teidai) as Professor of English from 1924-1927. Unaccompanied by his first wife and two children, he stayed at a modest inn near the university, and for the first year of his stay he was very lonely and suffered much from asthma. As that time Tokyo was recovering from a great earthquake, and life was in a state of paralysis. The teachers and students at the English Faculty looked forward to the teacher who could satisfy their curiosity about the West, and Edmund Blunden seemed to them a godsend messenger from what they saw as that liberated, culturally-advanced country, England.

He soon found himself very popular among the students: perhaps too popular, because most of his spare time was spent receiving dozens of visitors - students and devotees all of

whom wanted to know about England and her literature. Unlike his predecessor, Blunden was a kind, attentive and conscientious teacher and his students appreciated his readiness to talk to them.

Hayashi was not one of Blunden's students at Teidai. She had graduated from Tsuda College as one of the most promising pupils of its principal, Umeko Tsuda, a well-known pioneer of women's higher education. When Blunden first met Hayashi, he was twenty-eight years old. She was thirty-five and an English teacher at one of the women's high schools near Nagoya. According to her pupils' recollections, she was a typical Tsuda schoolmistress, a brisk-mannered bluestocking, not particularly attractive either in character or in appearance. But Hayashi was more than kind to Blunden, who, despite his enormous popularity among the students, was not happy in Japan. He often found his new life and role dull, and his frustration and difficulties were much mitigated by a growing love for Hayashi, who noted not only as a substitute for a wife and mother but also as an efficient secretary and literary companion. More than anything though, perhaps, he responded simply to her own love for him, writing (on September 24, 1925):

Your noble, generous, most womanly thought of "self-sacrifice" is in itself a great thing done for me. I want you, and I shall try not to give you any opportunity for that self sacrifice: you always will be putting me to shame with your active love.

The Japanese students were by no means tolerant of their respected teacher's relationship with Hayashi, venting their resentment in complaints about her dark-skinned features and ungracious personality. One of Blunden's pupils at the time, now an emeritus professor of English at Tokyo University, remembers that he used to mistake her for a housemaid. If Hayashi had been more conventionally attractive to the students, they would, he feels, have accepted her gladly; but she was far from conforming to the traditional Japanese ideal of a lady - pretty, modest and good-mannered. The students' rejection of Hayashi may well have prompted her decision to leave Japan for good.

The romance was well established by October 1924, as it is shown by the first letter from Blunden to "Dearest Autumn" (Aki means "autumn" in Japanese). He writes that he will meet her off the train at Tokyo, after a long night journey which he is worried will tire her:

It's a pity I am not able to be the Dominant Male, and speak to you like a father! For my own part, I think now if I watch carefully what I do and don't hurry I may be free of asthma again for a period. It would have been the best of remedies if you could have been here as you wished. I love you and your love.

Between 1924 and 1926 he sent her eighty such love letters. Possibly she was attracted to him because he was so different from Japanese men, who even Blunden could see were "dominant males"; and he was no less certainly drawn to her "acute mind and enquiring spirit", which only a foreigner at that time would have valued as a quality of Japanese womanhood.

Their relationship was in some ways not unlike something out of Lady Murasaki's tenth-century *Tale of Genji*, though on Hayashi's side it was a matter of giving him all she had, in the most prosaic as well as the most romantic ways, and of his accepting it from her with gratitude and deep affection. "Your careful packing was a model to careless me" he writes. "Some odd jobs are left until you come to the rescue, but I know you will not refuse them!" In 1925 they spent their Christmas holidays together, and afterwards they lived together at Blunden's official quarters provided by the University in the Kikafuji Hotel in Tokyo. There was some gossip at first and he wrote: "Do not take too seriously the rudeness or malice of the people in the hotel: their opinion is not worth a farthing now, and presently all vanishes..."

Undoubtedly Aki hoped that Blunden, whose relations with his first wife Mary had been strained before he left England, would marry her after a divorce. He may have seriously considered this possibility, but his letters show him making painful efforts to be honest with her about his position. In August 1925 he wrote:

The love I have for you is truly deep and I cannot reproach myself for it. I shall not grow old and dull over it, but hold you always as my Dear. This is not a declaration against my wife and our years of intimately shared existence, and I am anxious that you should see how we are towards one another; so here are two letters which I had from her this morning just before going out, do please read them and comprehend that side of my life. I must not hurt her and that is all I can say as a guide to us now. She is looking towards me always, as I read her letter.

But still how gentle and beauti-



Aki Hayashi and Edmund Blunden, c. 1925.

ful a love has awakened between you and I! I shall rely on it and live on it in many solitary hours. It is a charm to keep me going. I am most distressed that I cannot fulfil all that I ought to Autumn, as things stand now, but you have unselfish patience and a splendid courage. When I was with you the cares of this hurried and bilious world ceased to touch me. I loved whatever gave me the chance to do some slight thing for you and as it has been, so it will continue to be.

Aki asks me to write, - That I would sooner live with her, And be her lover, Than with anyone. If I was not already married. He wrote, and again: Why question so often? Why rob me of my peace? Have I not shown you my spirit, Made you the receiver of my intimate ideas, I enjoy the yellow flames of leaves

Entrusted to you the desires of my heart? In January 1927 he writes, as it were, a promise, and signs it. "In case I should ever marry a second time I should in all likelihood marry Aki, Edmund Blunden."

He was serious in his suggestion that Aki should come to live with him, about which he sent her a somewhat ambiguous hint: "Aki, Awaiting the happy day When she explores London for herself. She should come, but in what capacity? I have been thinking that I shall take you into our home as my copyist or secretary and I believe that it can be done without difficulty... I couldn't afford an English secretary, I need one; and that I think will be the reason why Aki-Chan comes. But there is time yet to discuss all side-issues. In the meantime their idyll continued. I enjoy the yellow flames of leaves

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which leap now from the chestnut trees - st Torsnamon they line the road. I also enjoy the small children of this town, who hail my strange apparition with "Thein-jin", and stup playing as though a giant were passing.

Shelley's biographer also believed, perhaps naively, in love's innocence. "If there is any innocence, it is love; and I cannot help loving you, though far off is one whom I love." While in Japan, at least, he seems to have occasionally entertained the idea that Aki should join the household of his wife, children and mother. "Soon I shall be writing my mother about a young Japanese lady who wants to see the land of her dreams and would be a great delight to have as a guest". He had quinned, resolved in various ways.

I wonder though whether you would not find a small town in the West of England rather monotonous. But as a first resting place in England it might do well, and you would find them all so natural and familiar that it would be the best way of beginning. Afterwards your experience of London and other places would be easily arranged - or more easily.

For her part, Aki seems to have had a romantic view of England as a utopia where neither burglars nor robbers lived, a view that Blunden did his best to correct: "We have some burglars and thieves in England too, Aki - you're an optimist. But they don't use knives quite so often as you think". But he understood Aki's feelings towards what was later to be her adopted country. In *The Mind's Eye* (1934) he wrote that the Japanese "passion for our literature resembles our own passion for Greek and Roman glories. England has become a new Athens to many Japanese."

On August 25, 1927 the pair landed at Plymouth and soon afterwards the idyll ended. Any ideas of a common ménage had to be given up. Blunden discovered that he still loved his wife and did not attempt to bring her and Aki together.

I am *most* anxious that you should be happy and yet it is yourself alone who can make you so, for my home is intensely dear to me and I cannot help giving my life to it, with the hope that everything there will become as nearly perfect as a man can find... but I can feel that loneliness and impatience you feel; they weigh on me among my other problems; I have you in my heart and feel that you are the only real gain I found in Japan. The chance of my renewing all that was beautiful in the love between me and my wife must dominate all my actions at present, any your devotion will not fail me in this my overwhelming hope and great task... If my feelings towards my wife had really died, I should not have to demand of you the sacrifice of being alone in London; but instead I find that I am inspired by her excellent qualities and her own love surviving all the dreary discords of the past years, to love her as gently as ever.

In 1930, after he had at last obtained a divorce, Aki may still have had hopes, but the final blow came when, two years later, Blunden married Sylvia Norman. Aki seems never to have complained or reproached him, and though his letters refer once or twice to her "making things more difficult", he always felt that he would count on her continued loyalty and support. "If you fail me now, I shall have one more black page in my life's story. She did not fail him, and in return he was

true to his pledge of looking after her financially.

I don't know how our money matters stand but am enclosing a cheque for £7 which I think will answer your needs; I suppose you will keep account of all for I don't have time...

I was much hurt at lunch yesterday by seeing that you were very hungry; I beg you not to let yourself be so, but withdraw what you want from Bishopsgate and next month I will make it up and supply the rest - this month I cannot receive much.

When she was ill he helped her with continued kindness. And he greatly valued her assistance in his later work, "heavily congratulating her on her transcript of John Clare's MS, which was 'extraordinarily difficult', and on her discovery of a letter from Clare to Woodhouse."

During the war Aki underwent the disagreeable experience of being an "enemy alien", but Blunden continued to employ and protect her. In 1947 he was appointed to a cultural mission to Japan, arriving in Yokohama in December 1947 with his third wife and their eldest daughter. (In the course of his three-year stay he was to give nearly 600 lectures.) Aki remained in London. Her pride made her keep her address secret from Japanese visitors, but she was intensely proud of her connection with the British Museum and had it posted on the alumni roll of the college where she had worked before resigning to accompany Blunden to England. When the news of her death reached him in Hong Kong he was shocked and saddened. In her will she left him her savings and all her other property.



This sketch of the baiku poet, Issa, a pupil of Bashō, is included in an exhibition of "Japanese Popular Literature of the Edo Period 1600-1868" at the British Library which opened this week and will run until June 1982.

## Landscapes of inner space

By Carmen Blacker

HAROLD STEWART

By the Old Walls of Kyoto  
463pp. New York and Tokyo:  
Weatherhill, \$22.50.

Harold Stewart is already known in this country as a poet, and as the translator of two volumes of *haikai* verse. His writings on Buddhism and on the philosophy *perennis* are less familiar outside Japan. For those who have had the privilege of meeting him and hearing his conversation, however, in the "ten-foot-square hermitage" in Kyoto which has been his home for the last fifteen years, this new book will be recognized as the proper distillation of the experience, in both the inner and the outer mode, of a remarkable personality.

By the Old Walls of Kyoto is primarily an account of a journey, but of a journey accomplished, as every pilgrim must be, on two levels. In the twelve poems which form the heart of the work Stewart conducts us on a *meiji* or circumambulation of twelve landscapes in the ancient and geomantic city of Kyoto. Under his guidance we are shown, in vivid detail, a succession of celebrated Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, gardens, tombs and peripheral hills. The journey, round these landscapes takes place, moreover, within a defined circle of time. We start amidst the green of late spring, continue through high summer, autumn and winter, to end, once more in spring, at the point where we started.

But the journey represents at the same time an interior spiritual search, in which the poet guides us with the correspondence between inner and outer, which is one of the persistent themes of the book; on a progression through the states of the soul undergone by the Buddhist pilgrim.

Each of the twelve poems is accompanied by a prose commentary, or essay, in which the various subjects touched upon in the poems are discussed and elucidated. This complementary structure of poem and prose, though unfamiliar in the West, in fact draws on Buddhist tradition, and Stewart in adopting it

is following the precedent of the Buddhist scholar who writes an "extended self-commentary in prose on his own more concentrated text in verse". Conversely, for those less concerned with poetry, the poems may be read as a verse epitome of the subjects expounded in the prose texts.

The twelve places in and around Kyoto which Stewart has chosen for the stages in his contemplative journey are all in some degree holy spots, sanctified either by natural beauty, by the subtle man-made hidden beauty known as *yugen*, or by the presence of a saint. Thus we begin among the exquisite green hills of Arashiyama, reaching an enclaved on the river of an ancient festival of music and boats. We then proceed through the celebrated Zen garden of Ryōanji, constructed of rocks and white sand; pursue in the heat of summer before the statue of Maitreya in the Kōryūji temple; continue, into autumn, at the Jakkōin nunnery at Ohara, and thence into the beautiful Tendai temple of Sanzenin. Thereafter, on our last stage, we are taken on a piercingly cold winter dawn into the Ginkakuji temple, and spring, to return once more, as spring itself recurs, through the tombs of the Kurodōin cemetery.

On an exterior level therefore, the book will serve as a "contemplative guide" to the incomparably rich artistic heritage of the ancient capital as it is found exemplified in these twelve places. "The poems are factually accurate," Mr Stewart explains, "down to the last topographical detail, as long and intimate observation on the spot could make them." Any obscurities, any needful background, any multiple layers of meaning, are elucidated in the prose commentaries, which will come, I predict, to serve as a little encyclopedia of Japanese culture. Among the astonishingly wide range of subjects treated, and treated with equally remarkable insight, are Japanese music and poetry, literature and history, sculpture, painting, architecture, gardens, pottery, flowers and tea.

Nor is this all. The journey has its analogical counterpart in the soul, as a passage through corresponding states of consciousness or inner space. Hence, as occasion arises in the poems, the prose essays "explore

in depth certain aspects of Buddhist and Taoist metaphysics and iconography, myth and ritual, and touch upon the festivals and legends of Shinto". Indeed, it is Stewart's wisdom in the metaphysical *perennis*, his easy lucidity in matters of the traditional spiritual quest and its archetypal symbols, and in particular his utter integrity and confident faith as a professed and practising member of the Shin sect of Buddhism, which lift this book into a category by itself and will cause the reader who "sees with" him to return to it again and again throughout his life.

Certain broad contrapuntal themes can be distinguished throughout the work. We soon discern, for example, the tension between the ancient city of Kyoto, still encapsulating traditional metaphysical values, and its modern, corrupt counterpart, the new Kyoto, a city of the arrogant forgetfulness of the world, in the "last stage" of its great cycle, for the "necropolis" which assigns reality only to that which is measurable and quantifiable.

A complex web of symbols may furthermore be discovered recurring through the poems: the wall, for example, which, as the title of the book suggests, both encloses and excludes; the White Path between two rivers, that familiar motif in Amidist art; the figure of the dragon, both in its descending form, *kudariyari*, and its ascending one, *noboriyari*, and which fused together express the *axis mundi*. Likewise the vocabulary of alchemy, expressing the transformation from base to pure, and assimilated to the spiritual quest, recurs again and again.

Overshadowing the whole work, however, can be discerned the polarities, and the poet's gradual progress from the one to the other. From the Zen view, which holds that enlightenment is impossible without self-effort of a particular kind, he moves towards the Shin view, which represents the Other Power teaching of the Pure Land schools, and which teaches that in the present declining age man is unable to free himself by any efforts of his own from the great delusion, and must throw himself entirely on the mercy of Amida Buddha. He writes with a particular simplicity and intensity which enables us to "see" through his eyes:

In poem 2, for example, Stewart finds himself meditating in the celebrated Zen stone garden of Ryōanji.

The deep tranquillity of wooded hills  
That rise behind the temple has been brought

Into this walled enclosure, which insinuates  
Monastic quietude, an atmosphere  
Filled with mysterious emptiness, for here  
The open secrecy of Zen is taught  
By fifteen stones within a sand-courtyard  
A dry *kōan* which haunts and teases thought

With bare insistence that it cannot seize  
Like these cicadas shaking, faintly seen  
Their silver silences in the cedar trees.

As the poem advances through the first ten landscapes, however, he becomes increasingly aware of the supreme Buddhist paradox: how can we purify ourselves spiritually by efforts made from an illusory ego? How can efforts made from within a black prison affect the bright scene outside? Only when the mysterious Awakening of the Faith, or *hoitsu-bodaijin*, occurs, which once experienced is recognized to be beyond ego, and to be a transference from the responding Buddha nature in ourselves. That here is "the only miracle recognised by the Buddha," Stewart comes to realize in his tenth and longest poem, when he arrives on an autumn evening at the Tendai temple of Sanzenin. As he makes his way through the halls and past the murals of the temple, he experiences a vision of the Amida Triad, and of the Pure Land itself through a series of contemplations which recall those described in the *Amida-yūryāna Sutra*.

Only by grace such as this can we hope to achieve liberation at this particular time. For Stewart believes, in accordance with the metaphysical *perennis* expressed by such writers as René Guénon, A. K. Coomaraswamy, Marco Palla and Kathleen Raine, that we have reached that last stage of the cycle, in which the only kind of reality recognizable is that of the material, quantifiable world. Again and again he reminds us that the physical world is not the only reality, and, further, that this very physical world, cut off from its corresponding higher levels, becomes dead and meaningless. Our modern malady, with its loss of a spiritual centre of purpose and meaning,

recurs throughout the narrative. "The lower levels of reality can form adequate symbols of the higher", but once deny the higher and the familiar world is robbed of significance.

In the last poem, when the journey has been accomplished full circle, we hear the theme of the Bodhisattva, who renounces his liberation from the wheel in order to turn to help those still bound to it, as the figure in the last of the Ten Overriding Pictures returns to the marketplace with hands bestowing bliss. Stewart wonders, will his words be heard in this final age, when the truth of the dharma is obscured, and when our own minor cycle is renewed only against the background of the decline of the larger movement? He sees the new Kyoto, and the temple pond polluted with refuse. But of the last there blows over its surface a shower of white petals.

Only scant justice can be done in a short review to this large and remarkable book. To mention only a smattering of the subjects discussed in the course of the commentaries we may cite: the landscape of the Pure Land; its trees and jewels; the ranks of dragons; the number of colours visible in the rainbow and loss of the "true doctrine of seven colours"; the nature of the Buddhist icon which reflects the hidden aspect of him who looks at it; Zen *kōans* and the disposition of stones in Zen gardens.

By the Walls of Old Kyoto is further embellished by a perimion binding, and papers representing tiles in the Daitokuji temple, and by 24 enchanting landscapes by four notable Japanese artists of the nineteenth century, chosen from the *Yōfūgachō*, an album of pictures of the old capital.

In his translation of *The Zen Poems of Ryōkan* (219pp. Princeton University Press, £13.40), Nobuyuki Yuasa illustrates, and in his introduction evaluates, the variety of subjects present in the poetry of an Edo period poet-priest of the late Edo period. Ryōkan lived as a recluse for most of his life during which he wrote some fourteen hundred *waka* (Japanese poems), four hundred *kanshi* (Chinese poems), and a small number of *haikai*.

## Waving the flag of liberty

By Jean-Pierre Lehmann

THOMAS M. HUBER:  
*The Revolutionary Origins of Modern Japan*  
260pp. Stanford University Press.  
\$19.50.  
0 8047 1048 1

ROGER W. BOWEN:  
*Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan*  
A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement  
367pp. University of California Press.  
\$28.  
0 520 03665 4

The origins of the political revolution of 1868 and Japan's subsequent transformation to modernity, according to Thomas Huber, can be found in the thoughts and deeds of low-income, well-educated, mercantile and bureaucratic *samurai* of the Chōshū han. Focusing his attention on Yoshida Shōin, Kusaka Genzui and Takasugi Shinsaku, he seeks not only to establish the social background, intellectual achievements and political commitment of these revolutionaries but also to show that they, and especially Yoshida, provided a blueprint for the reforms which followed their untimely deaths - they were all killed before the Meiji Restoration - and that both their motivations and their ambitions were primarily endogenous rather than responses to Western stimulation. He strongly supports the view that class struggle was a significant factor in the political events which culminated in the overthrow of the Tokugawa régime and rejects the interpretation of the Meiji Restoration as a "revolution from above". Instead he argues that it

was a social rebellion carried out by Japan's disciplined and highly educated service intelligentsia, against aristocratic oppression and outmoded social forms. The Restorationists were motivated to act politically, first, because of material deprivation suffered by their class, and second, because of their idealistic commitment to the welfare of the whole political community. Both of these motivating interests were deeply rooted in their social conditions as members of the Tokugawa service intelligentsia.

Despite claims to the contrary, there is, in fact, little originality in the major propositions of this book. This may explain why, in spite of its being reasonably brief, there is a great deal of repetition. And, in

view of the author's frequent reference to the staunch idealism of the Chōshū intelligentsia, one wonders how well acquainted he is with Japanese history after 1868. Not only do Ito Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo figure in his category of idealists, but even Shinagawa Yajirō, while Ito and Yamagata were undoubtedly able statesmen, they were essentially opportunistic politicians, hardly characterized by "idealistic commitment to the welfare of the whole political community", while Shinagawa is mainly remembered for his brutal repression of political rights and strong-arm police tactics, resulting in numerous deaths. In Japan's early parliamentary elections, Huber's enthusiasm for his heroes, however, remains undiminished. Through their sacrifices and efforts

sweeping changes altered the essential quality of public life. They brought a vitality and rationality that enlivened all spheres of public action. There soon followed unprecedented growth in crop yields, commerce, and industry. There arose a vigorous press and a healthy general clamor for democracy. Philosophy, literature, and the arts, nourished by foreign as well as native inspiration, flourished as never before. Famine was unknown, and modern medical knowledge spread across the land. In the end the reforms would rescue tens of millions of ordinary Japanese from ignorance, disease, and want.

This utopian view of Meiji Japan is a very, very far cry from the society which Roger Bowen in *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan* so vividly describes and analyses. In fact, we have here something completely different, namely one of the most stimulating, indeed challenging studies of modern Japanese social history to have emerged in recent years. We also have a truly revisionist work in which hardly one orthodox interpretation or its upholders is spared. Bowen has challenged the establishment, and though not all of his conclusions will be readily accepted - and indeed he is likely to unleash a very exciting debate - it would be churlish on the part of any of his critics not to congratulate him.

Bowen skillfully uses the social scientist's tools, but not his jargon; his book is, in fact, very well written. He displays an impressive command of his subject not just from the particular Japanese viewpoint, but in its universal perspective. Bowen therefore avoids the pitfall of parochialism

which has too often marred contemporary studies of modern Japan.

His major concern is to analyse the social and economic foundations of the movement for freedom and popular rights of the 1870s and 1880s and its political ideologies, organizations and ambitions. By concentrating on three rebellions, namely the Fukuoshima, Kabasan and Chichibu incidents, he assesses their wider implications to determine whether democracy had been attempted and to what extent it was achieved. The orthodox interpretation is that democracy was not seriously attempted, essentially because it was not understood, but that in so far as it had been, it most certainly was not a success. Bowen's assertion is that democracy was attempted and that it should not be perceived as a failure. While there is a great deal of empirical data and theoretical consideration in his work much more than a short review can do justice to - three major themes deserve special attention.

Bowen justifies his conclusions and radical differences from past interpretations with the claim that

the main weakness of the "failure thesis" lies in its neglect of the practice of politics at different levels of society. The level at which most specialists on Japan have aimed their historical analyses - the elite and national level of politics, the level occupied by national party leaders, the chiefs of big business, and high ranking government officials.

Consequently, "past treatments of the political history of this period have generally not been very sensitive to commoners and the organization and ideology behind their rebellions". In contrast to previous historiographical emphasis on perceiving history "from above", the author provides a rich, detailed and penetrating analysis of history "from below".

Bowen insists that the rebellious commoners were by no means motivated by chauvinism, traditionalism or millenarianism, but that they were progressive in outlook. He examines the central and crucial role of Ueki Emori - one of the most sophisticated political theorists of Meiji Japan - in translating complicated concepts for the masses. Among the methods Ueki used was that of composing popular songs, for example the "Country Song of Popular Rights". In this way the commoners were treated to lessons in Western political history and philosophy. Thus, democracy may have been re-

jected by the elites, but not only did an acquaintance with and understanding of its fundamental precepts filter down to the lower layers of society, but indeed they were eagerly espoused.

Bowen's case resides essentially in a rejection of cultural determinism. The doctrine of natural rights helped the rebels to "express in universal terms the way things ought to be, and to condemn in absolute terms the way things were". This radical break with past orthodoxy - according to which man enjoyed no rights but was beset with obligations - arose "because conditions had changed sufficiently to make obsolete the old political idiom derived from subsistence and Confucian ethics". The political violence in which the commoners engaged reflected "the growth of liberal or bourgeois economic and political forces in Japan during the 1880s", which led to a "rising political consciousness that could only be manifest in capitalistic society, that is, a consciousness of the idea that political obligation to the State rested upon the State's recognition that property and freedom are the basic indivisible and inalienable rights of all men". If

this form of political rebellion was more prevalent in the countryside than in the cities, that was because "Japanese capitalist growth was 'rural centred'". This will undoubtedly constitute the most controversial aspect of Bowen's thesis for it requires a fairly unqualified acceptance of the view that the base determines the superstructure.

In 1945 American forces finally liberated Japan and unleashed, during the occupation, the spontaneous and deep-rooted democratic tendencies of the Japanese people. In the years of reconstruction, the American model was there to be emulated, but this avid desire to gain freedom as it was experienced and understood in the West had for long been a cry of the oppressed Japanese masses, as indeed is illustrated in "Jiyū no uta" ("Song of Liberty"), one of the popular songs of the 1880s:

Follow the path of the English Revolution:  
Yesterday a King, today a rebel.  
Crownwell's beheading with a flag of Liberty in his hand  
Almost upset Heaven.  
By putting King Charles to death  
The basis of liberty was laid.

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## Related roles

By Michael Pye

T. P. KASULIS:  
*Zen Action Zen Person*  
177pp. Hawaii: University Press.  
\$12.95.

What can emptiness and no-mind have to do with the Western concept of personhood? T. P. Kasulis ploughs a courageous furrow. Having both the necessary skills and a clear purpose, he performs a remarkable feat of meditation. Parts of *Zen Action, Zen Person* encompass well-known themes: Nagarjuna's logic of emptiness, the Chinese concepts of tao and non-being, the weaving together of these in Zen tradition, and the consequent move from logic to spontaneity and intuitive perception. With thirteenth-century Sōtō Zen master Dōgen and the very different Rinzai master Hakuin (1685-1768), Kasulis takes us into the heart of the Japanese Zen experience. Somehow he manages to communicate in book form the subtle difference between "not-thinking", which is nihilistic, and "without-thinking", which is so acceptance of everyday mental occurrences without being ensnared

by them. For the thoughtful Westerner this must be one of the most clear and perceptive accounts of Zen available.

Thoroughly new is Kasulis's attempt to locate the Zen understanding of the person to secular Japanese assumptions. The meaning of personal existence in Japanese terms is entirely bound up with the network of relationships which defines responsibility and security. An individual in abstraction from these is of little worth. A person consists of his roles in relationship. Zen practice too leads right away from abstractions and principles but sees a-theistic being in uneluctated, spontaneous response to things as they are, or as they come. Thus Zen can easily be related to many other activities such as art or swordsmanship. At the same time Zen drives back down to the time of personhood, namely non-being, and teaches non-attachment to secular duties and calculations, even while these are being performed. This has a breathtaking effect. Though Kasulis does not say so, it is therefore good for trade. Thus both Masters and managers are content.

If Zen Buddhism in its Japanese form fits so well with Japanese social assumptions, how can it be related to the Western mind (if there is such a

thing) or to Western needs? Does the concept of personhood as a created and/or creative centre of energy with its own persistent identity not run counter to such an emptying-out in pure relationship? Kasulis admits that a straight transmission to the West is not possible, but maintains that the power of the Zen perception may be drawn upon through an internalization of Zen practice. This will lead to a relinquishment of the idea that theories and systems can explain and control everything, or that truth can be progressively accumulated and used, with ourselves as the centre of some fixed set of arrangements. The genuine person will then be one "who intrinsically has no standpoint" (from the old Indian Mahayana Buddhism) yet who is ready to adopt specific perspectives for the practical articulation of science and art. The ideal is then "to be essentially no person, while simultaneously being the personal act appropriate to the occasion", whereupon Kasulis lapses, with Bashō, into poetry.

What he does not explain is why Japanese society, if so in tune with Zen, is itself so effectively imprisoned in premeditated inter-personal and economic calculations. Surely there is more to Zen than social robotics.

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## Working the miracle

By Jeremy Hardie

G. C. ALLEN:  
The Japanese Economy  
262pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.  
£4.50.  
0 297 77950x

Dazzled as we all now are by Japanese industrial success, it is easy to forget how very similar their economy is to the British. Take the familiar litany of defects popularized in a hundred accounts of the failure of the British economy. We have a rigid society, where individual success depends on the right education and the right connections. Profit is a dirty word, and wage levels are fixed according to whether they are seen to be fair and maintain adequate living standards, rather than on the contribution made by each employee to output. The government constantly interferes with business, and businessmen spend as much time worrying about the bureaucrats and politicians as they do on running their own affairs. No matter what government is in power, corporatism is dominant; extra-parliamentary forces such as the civil service and the bankers regulate the activities of the private sector. The classical model of free enterprise is irrelevant; the economy is not only mixed, but hopelessly confused between private profit, planning, state intervention and the market.

This picture of British society and its economy, for all its simplifications, is remarkable in that, *mutatis mutandis*, it applies just as well to the Japanese. In Japan, it matters a great deal to have attended Tokyo University, or some similar institution, and there become part of an able and influential group. Just as if you have been at Eton, the freemasonry will help you throughout your career, whether you go into business, a bank or, the civil service. The

metaphor of Japan Incorporated, although stale and ill-understood, captures important features of Japanese business and political life. Collision and joint planning are part of the essential fabric of Japanese industry. It makes no real sense to talk of Japan being a free-market economy on the pattern of the American ideal.

Why do these oddities, shackle the British, but turn to gold in the hands of the Japanese? One pessimistic view, quoted by G. C. Allen in his excellent book, is that their successes "seem to rest on social and political values at least as much as on economic variables." That is, the Japanese have a long history of deference, loyalty and group activity which is ideally suited to upturning huge industries. The Anglo-American tradition is individualistic and competitive - qualities which may have been ideal for running small enterprises in the nineteenth century, but are often fatal to the cooperation needed for large-scale, technically complex production. If this analysis is right, there is not much that the West can do - we cannot, after all, re-create instinctive Japanese values in Detroit or Longbridge.

However, as appears from Allen's account, social and political harmony have not always existed in Japan. The Meiji restoration itself was the climax of a huge shift in class and political attitudes; the 1930s were racked by tension; and even after the war cohesion was not established until 1950, when the Japanese were allowed by the Americans to readopt many of their pre-war habits and institutions. The fact that these virtues now exist and operate so effectively is thus partly a matter of luck in the sense of being inexplicably linked with other features of Japan and the post-war world.

A more optimistic view, which seems nearer Allen's own position, is

that Japan has done nothing more magical than to succeed with industrial policies which seem quite unoriginal to Westerners, but need considerable skill if they are to be operated well. The Japanese have been as generous with protection and subsidies to favoured sectors of the economy as any Bannite could wish; they take the infant-industry argument seriously. A new industry in a technically advanced sector can expect to be defended against foreign competition until it is strong enough to stand on its own feet. The interesting question, therefore, is not whether market forces should be the determining factor, but why it is that the Japanese breed swans, while we nurse lame ducks. A similar case applies to indicative planning, the nearest Western analogue to the links between business, finance and the bureaucracy by which Japanese industry is constricted. One view is that the experience of George Brown in 1945 shows that such planning is presumptuous and absurd. The Japanese record, however, shows that it can be made to work: the targets may not be infallibly hit, but the economy does indeed grow faster, in the general direction that was intended. It would be odd for us to condemn coordination of industry and the identification of leading sectors when the most successful economy in the world relies so heavily on these techniques.

But there is more to the success of the Japanese than their effective use of indicative planning. Allen quotes the case of Mitsui which took over a bankrupt company in the early post-war years in order to acquire its three or four hundred technically qualified graduate employees. "Shouldering a deficit of from one to one and a half billion yen was no real loss if it could gain such a team of technical people." This little anecdote points many lessons. In Britain, there are alarmingly few companies with such a stock of qualified people.

We have no shortage of first rate graduates in English and Economics, and our academic scientists are excellent, if not numerous. But in 1978 nearly 80,000 engineering graduates emerged from Japanese universities and colleges compared with 9,000 in Britain. However well we may plan, however well the free market may operate, we suffer from a fundamental lack of manpower which no central government, however resourceful, can compensate for by its genius in economic policy.

Our attitude to profit is a further serious handicap. On the one hand, there is the purist view, most commonly found in the City and some business schools, that profitability is a sure sign of virtue. Good management means rationalization, cutting out loss-makers, and only spending money when a profitable outcome can clearly be identified. Such is the ideology which lies behind much of the present government's thinking. Alternatively, profit is seen as a heartless and ultimately inefficient yardstick of social welfare, which both government and business should be willing to subordinate to wider considerations. So dying industries are given grants, employment is subsidized, and industrial policy becomes an inefficient arm of the Department of Health and Social Security.

The Japanese, with a very different capital market, and very different business traditions, take a third route. They habitually agree to lose money now in the general expectation that the experience and development on which the money has been spent will serve them well in the future. This attitude is unsatisfactorily vague; it involves no precise identification and quantification of the timing and amount of future profits, which is what the more rigorous business schools in America would require. It relies rather on a general confidence that if, for example, a company spends a large amount of

money on acquiring and re-training excellent technical graduates, it is bound to pay off somehow. The Japanese bring to business the same attitudes that other countries bring to research and development, and education - activities where the link between the money invested and the return is necessarily vague and cannot easily be reduced to profit and loss.

These policies have important lessons for Britain. First, it is plain that no amount of ingenuity in controlling the money supply, managing aggregate demand, devising inflation taxes or exercising any of the other skills at which Britain is by international standards very expert will compensate for a cultural and educational system which does not equip people technically to do what the Japanese do. Second, we should not in future be so scornful of government or business expenditure which cannot show a quick return. Take the case of Concorde. This has plainly been a commercial disaster; no amount of creative accountancy can produce anything but a massive loss for the project looked at in isolation. But considered as a piece of R & D, or a programme for maintaining and enhancing high technical skills, it looks a great deal better. It is inconceivable that Britain would now have even the modest level of applied scientific expertise that she does if she had not been willing to spend money on advanced technical projects without any very certain prospect of commercial success.

Professor Allen's book provides a mass of detail on all aspects of the Japanese economy, varied with enough analysis and reflection to keep the reader's intellectual spirits high. It will certainly serve as an excellent general introduction to the subject; and the author's long experience of Japan and its ways will provide even the specialist with some unexpected insights.

Japanese laws and government statements about the need to "harmonize" environmental protection with the development of efficient industry without putting the phrase in ironclad quotes and without implying, indeed asserting at one point, that these provisions "ensured the priority of industrial concerns".

Hence, I do not always find their judgments convincing. The argument about whales and Japan's internationalism is a case in point. Such is the emotional intensity of the whole lobby that it is hard to know where the conservationist arguments about stocks and depletion rates end and an abhorrence for the whole idea of "harvesting" such agreeable creatures as whales begins. All this should make one as suspicious about conservationist versions of the scientific evidence for the likelihood of whale extinction as about the alternative versions preferred by the whaling companies. But these doubts do not seem to affect the authors, who are critical of Japan's position on whaling as showing an "uncertain commitment" to her obligations to the environment. The bias however makes all the more compelling their judgment that in the environmental field "there is some evidence that counter-measures in Japan have been executed more efficiently, and also more equitably, than comparable Western initiatives".

For most of the book, in any case, they are not concerned to judge or to campaign; professionalism takes over. In their analysis of legal issues, their careful charting of administrative measures and the arguments developed in support of them, their lengthy summaries of individual cases, in spite of a commendable lucidity, all this takes them about 250,000 words. If the resulting price reinforces the popular prejudice that the environmentalist movement is a very well-beeled movement indeed, that would be a pity. It would be an irony, too, since the Japanese environmental movement has been very much a movement of the poor for the urban poor.

Campaigners tend to consider such questions as mystifications designed to blunt the attack of the righteous on those who would despoil our natural heritage or greedily seek profits at the community's expense. The authors cannot translate the phrases in

DONALD KEENE:  
Meeting with Japan  
168pp. Tokyo: Gakuseisha. Yen 1200.  
Travels in Japan  
236pp. Tokyo: Gakuseisha. Yen 1700.

EUGENE FODOR (Editor):  
Fodor's Budget Japan '81  
186pp. Columbus Books, 24 Red Lion Street, London WC1R 4PX.  
£2.75.  
0 679 00655 9

PAT BARR:  
Japan  
146pp. Batsford. £7.95.  
0 7134 0578 3

HOWARD SMITH (Editor):  
Inside Japan  
224pp. BBC Publications. £7.50.  
0 563 16300 3

"The Jap isn't a native", wrote Kipling, "and he isn't a Sahib either." Easy enough to laugh now at these crudely sniggering terms, stereotypes from our ignorant past; but as E. M. Wilson makes abundantly clear, in his *Misunderstanding: Europe versus Japan*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, the contemporary out-Japan and the Japanese is really no better. In one of his two collections of brief pieces (originally written, mainly in Japanese, as specific commissions for Japanese newspapers and periodicals), Donald Keene reports the sort of reaction he teed to get when he told people in Cambridge, in the early 1950s, that he taught Japanese literature: "I suppose they got everything from the Chinese. They're nothing but a race of imitators, aren't they?" At a more practical level, there is the general action that Japan today, and in particular Tokyo, is a pulsating, warren, impossibly crowded and complex and polluted. In its brisk, brash way, the new Fodor Guide (*Budget Japan '81*) tries to put paid to that: "Contrary to what you may suppose, Japan is easy."

"Easy" in this context, of course, means "easy for the traveller", with the corollary (given that it is a *Budget* guide) that the traveller, if he learns a trick or two, will find it

## A tremendissimo tour

By Fosco Maraini

ALBERTO ARBASINO:  
Trans-Pacific Express  
220pp. Milan: Garzanti. L.8500.

During the 1970s Alberto Arbasino visited a number of countries around the Pacific, making copious notes and writing brilliant articles for Italian papers. Now an assortment of all this material has been published in book form.

Signor Arbasino is extraordinarily good on the subject that pleases him, when all the capricious baroque splendour of his prose makes sense. His chapter on Bali, for instance, is delightful, carrying his reader through night and day, through field, lane and village square, running after folk theatricals and local festivals, as if under a spell.

Arbasino's Italian is distinctive and highly personal - and therefore very difficult to translate. He makes full and continuous use of all those suffixes (-mo, -one, -ismo, -ocio, -illo) so characteristic of Italian, which instantly change ordinary nouns and adjectives into things gigantic or microscopic, lovable or detestable, puny or superlative. The subject here takes over the object and transforms it according to a sec-

cheaper than he has been led to believe: the Japanese "manage to live there on an average per capita income just exceeding that of the Italians". Introductions and guides to Japan, and surveys of a general sort, tend to work on the assumption that the ordinary reader and/or traveller needs to be led by the hand through a maze. So the blurb to Pat Barr's *Japan* asserts: "What the Western visitor needs most especially for Japan is a clear, concise explanation of the various aspects of Japanese life which he finds so puzzling." Coming at it from another angle, Howard Smith's brief introduction to his collection of essays by various professionals in Japanese studies makes one of its main aims the dispelling of misconceptions: "In view of its significance in the world today, it is surprising how little is really known about Japan and how much of this knowledge is still based either on prejudice or on outdated stereotypes." (The book "develops some of the themes suggested by the BBC Television series *Inside Japan*", screened last year, of which Mr Smith was the producer.)

All the books I have in front of me begin from a standpoint of sympathy; all set out, at their various levels and with varying degrees of inwardness, to be explanatory. Both sympathy and explanation are not new in Western commentaries on Japan. In the 1890s and early 1900s, that strange Greek-Irish American Lafcadio Hearn was busily producing book after book on Japan, on what he believed to be both the inner and outer life of the country, whose nationality he took and in whose soil he was buried. Though a far more profound scholar, Donald Keene in a curious way shows Hearn-like proclivities in *Meeting with Japan* and *Travels in Japan*; and in fact he has been intimate with Japan for a much longer period than was Hearn - over thirty years, as compared with Hearn's fifteen or so. I am sure that Professor Keene, whose translating, editing, writing and lecturing, along with that of Edward Seldensiecker and the late Ivan Morris, has been in the forefront of studies of Japanese culture during these years, would not thank me for pressing the Hearn comparison: he is a professional, Hearn was a sort of belle-traitist amateur. But Keene, writing, as I have said, mainly for a Japanese non-specialist audience, is

Hearn-like in what I would call his naive good-heartedness.

His early and later encounters with Japan, his meetings with Tanizaki, Mishima, Oe Kenzaburo and Abe Kobo, his descriptions of places as far north as Hakodate and as far south as Fukuoka, are all sketched with an emotional gentleness which can, in repeated small doses (all these essays and portraits are short), add up to an impression of insipidity. Most of them - naturally enough, given the audience for which they were written - assume a background knowledge the foreign newcomer will lack; while the foreigner with some experience of the subject-matter may find the treatment too bland. *Meeting with Japan*, Keene writes in his Preface, "is the story of a man who found a subject, a language and a people who made his life as a scholar not only worthwhile but happy." This is said, and the story is told, with what seems to be disarming simplicity. But I could wish for rather more of the rigour and subtlety that Professor Keene has brought to his other work, such as *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (1972).

Pat Barr's book, with a chapter called "Aids for the Foreign Businessman", is part travel-guide, part explanatory introduction. The author has written some excellently researched, highly entertaining studies of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western contacts with Japan (*The Coming of the Barbarians*, *The Deer Cry Pavilion*, *A Curious Life for a Lady*). In the Batsford book she provides something at a more elementary level, paddy plain and sometimes a bit plodding. Though nicely produced, it is distressingly full of misprints, with "statutory welfare officers", "athinal philosophy", and a famous work of art called the "Diastutus". Fodor's *Budget Japan*, for all its vulgarity with headings such as "A Bit of Old Japan (Well, Almost)", is actually a more practical introduction for someone who is confronting Japan for the first time and who wants to live and travel relatively cheaply. But for anyone who wants more than encapsulated information about places it needs to be augmented with a full-scale guidebook, the best being one simply called *Japan: The New Official Guide*, compiled by the Japan

National Tourist Organization, and a model for all such things: the most recent revision I have is the 1975 edition, which is remarkably good value at 5000 yen.

Howard Smith's BBC publication is the most searching and authoritative of these books. He has assembled six British experts, most of them employed by or connected with the Centre of Japanese Studies at Sheffield University, each of whom examines different social, cultural, economic and political aspects of contemporary Japan. They write in detail, quote statistics liberally, and make no compromises; but the stuff is highly readable, and very well and imaginatively illustrated - as one would hope, given the television origin of the book. Even Douglas Anthony's chapter "Economic growth and industrial competition" was far more comprehensible and pleasant than I had feared.

When I first set off for Japan in 1955, newly married and embarking on my first job, there was nothing like the sheer quantity available today of explanatory, introductory, practical (or indeed impractical) publications. Japan's "miracle", its soaring flight to economic and technological importance during the past him".

twenty-five years, has changed all that. There is really no excuse for the continuing ignorance, faults, prejudices and misunderstandings. E. M. Wilson writes about. On the other hand, no one will understand Japan, or ingratiate himself with the Japanese, by supposing or asserting that we are really all the same. (A Japanese friend and I were agreeing the other day that we are bit tired of those hoary Japan/Britain analogues cited by the Japanese as much as by the British - ancient monarchies, islands off the mainland, bad linguists, etc. etc.) And one has to be alert to changes as well as continuities, because Japan is no more a fossilized society than is Britain. Even Lafcadio Hearn, for all his faded wisdom and sentimentality, was long ago aware of that. His essay "A Glimpse of Tendencities", written in 1895, is worth reading as an intelligent forecast of the future he saw, wrong though he has turned out to be in several details. What depressingly survives, with the balance now weighted thoroughly against us rather than the Japanese, is Hearn's assertion that "the foreigner, as a general rule, understands the Japanese quite as little as the Japanese understands him".

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## The two-way trade in distortion

By Richard Storry

ENDYMION WILKINSON:

Misunderstanding: Europe versus Japan  
29pp. Tokyo: Chuokoron-Sha.  
Yen 1200.  
0030 001438 4622

This instructive study of a highly topical subject was originally published in Japanese last year and quickly became, it seems, something of a best-seller. That is not surprising. The Japanese, always curious to know what outsiders think of them, were bound to be particularly interested in the views and recommendations of a knowledgeable figure such as Endymion Wilkinson, an Englishman with some 35 years experience of Japan as head of the economic section of the EEC Delegation in Tokyo.

It is probably true to say that most Japanese are disenchanted by indications that the triumphant advance of their country's economy is viewed with misgivings by much of the European business world. Two years have gone by since the substance of a confidential EEC report on trade friction with Japan leaked out to the press, when two phrases in the report acquired instant notoriety. The Japanese, said the report, were "workaholics" living in homes that "Westerners would regard as little more than rabbit hutchies". This was not very flattering to *anioru* *prope*, especially in view of the fact that a famous earlier comment by the late Mr. Bhutto, suggesting that the Japanese were "economic animals", had by no means been forgotten.

The language of the EEC report attracted particular notice, no doubt, because like most caricatures it contained a measure of truth. Enormously high land prices do compel people in Japan to live in small flats and houses, sophisticated in terms of their household equipment though these may be. And most people in Japan do put their backs into any

job they undertake and appear, very rightly, to derive satisfaction from so doing.

Now Endymion Wilkinson cites an *Asahi Shimbun* national public opinion poll showing that nearly 60% of those polled felt that "rabbit hutchies" and "workaholics" were a fair description of their situation. What was not related was the fact that these comments came from a foreign source. In this instance, therefore, can it not be argued that the "misunderstanding" on the European side does not relate to the facts - the cramped living conditions and for this reason is not really a misunderstanding at all? Be that as it may, genuine misunderstandings arising from distorted images date back many years; and in the first half of his book Wilkinson traces the history of Japan's relations with Europe since the sixteenth century, covering ground familiar to specialists, and he is able to point out the exaggerations and plain inaccuracies that coloured European interpretations of the Japanese scene. Japanese-European relations after a promising beginning were largely severed in the early seventeenth century, thereafter remaining extremely tenuous for over two hundred years. During that period, as Wilkinson observes, "educated Europeans, if they thought about Japan at all, were convinced that it was a rich appanage of China". This view, he goes on, "has belatedly been the European perception of East Asia and Japan right up to our own time". As evidence of this he cites a Japanese report of 1977 claiming that in five European countries a minority of high school children believed Japan to be a part of China.

Yet Europeans with some first-hand knowledge of Japan often painted a picture of the land and its society that exaggerated the differences between the cultures of East and West. Wilkinson's short term for his body of distortions is "the Up-side-Down Land". Pierre Loti, needless to say, is seen as one of the

prime offenders here; but so is Lafcadio Hearn. According to Wilkinson, Loti and Hearn and other writers (including Kipling) depicted Japan either as a society essentially lightweight and frivolous (dolls-like women, very accessible to young foreign globe-trotters and sailors) or curiously mysterious, and in the end incomprehensible to the European mind. Wilkinson does not exclude that famous Japanologist, Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain, from the company of those guilty of distorting the picture. He quotes a passage from *Things Japanese*, where Hall Chamberlain points out that the foreign resident, even after years of living in Japan, may still be "pulled up sharp, and forced to explain that all his experience does not yet suffice to probe the depths of the mental disposition of this fascinating but enigmatical race". Wilkinson, with a certain hardihood, dismisses this as the view of "a prejudiced 19th century European professor".

If the European view of Japan, more often than not, has been partial and one-sided, veering between extremes of fascinated, affectionate interest and fearful dislike, Japanese outlook on Europe has tended to follow the same pattern, but with one important qualification: the Japanese have always known a very great deal more about Europe, especially Britain, France and Germany, than Europeans have known about Japan. But here too distortions are not lacking. The Japanese, as Wilkinson puts it, regard Western Europe as a "Cultural Museum" - which, of course, does describe one important and admirable element of the region's total structure. But there seems to be a tendency in Japan, especially within the last fifteen or twenty years, to place excessive emphasis on this aspect of the matter; for the corollary here is that the field of high technology Europe is regarded (since it is a "museum") as somehow backward. And yet who could argue that the distortion implied by this view is totally unjustified? As Wilkinson himself admits, "Europe offers to the Japanese visi-

tor those jewels of the tourist trade - cultural monuments, good shopping and exotic sex - all at reasonable prices and all set in an elegant stagnation".

The final section of this thoughtful study is entitled "What Is To Be Done?". It is divided into two parts, the first concerned with means to improve European-Japanese economic and trade relations, the second with those to improve communications between Europe and Japan. For a start, the EEC should endeavour to speak with one voice. The author tells us that a few years ago the Council of Europe called upon Japan to reduce her shipbuilding capacity; but, just after that earnest appeal had been made, a Danish shipping company ordered six bulk carriers from Japanese shipyards. Then the point is made that the timing and causes of European trade disputes almost invariably follow the same pattern. A "domestic business downturn" in Japan, or an outside factor such as a huge increase in oil prices, greatly enhances "pressure to export". If this coincides with a recession in Europe, and Japanese exports are concentrated in a labour-intensive sector, trade friction occurs. Wilkinson believes that if the causes of friction are clear it should be possible for the EEC and Japan "to work each other in time to take remedial actions before the outbreak of actual frictions". Since the institutional framework for bilateral consultations already exists.

Looking ahead to the rest of this decade, and into the 1990s, the Japanese, as the author tells us, have clearly signalled their export intentions. They will move increasingly into knowledge-intensive industries (such as microchip electronics, computers, and numerically controlled machine tools). So the Europeans should begin to meet the challenge by restructuring their own industries on similar lines, and by investing in the Japanese market so as to create the infrastructure for sophisticated exports from Europe.

On a broader front in Europe a great deal could and should be done, in terms of encouraging knowledge of Japan in general undergraduate courses; while in Japan there is a need for more centres of European studies. Implicit in all this is the belief that by such means the impact of distorted and out-of-date mutual images can be greatly reduced, although not perhaps entirely eliminated. One has to be optimistic. To anyone with some first-hand experience of both societies no more unnecessary rift could occur than that between a democratic West and Europe and a Japan pacifist and industrious, operating within the structure of the 1946 Constitution.

Inevitably - it is central to his argument - Wilkinson underplays the real differences, for example in religion, culture and psychology, that distinguish Japan and Europe from one another. He is right to emphasize that concentration on these differences has been all too often excessive, and thus in varying degrees harmful. But there is also some risk involved for the European, when dealing with a Japanese counterpart, if he imagines that there is nothing particularly strange to be encountered that a fluent interpreter of the language cannot fully elucidate.

All in all, this is a book of considerable interest and some importance. Its message indeed must become increasingly significant as international communications continue to develop, with travel time becoming inexorably shorter as the decades pass. Finally, the author should be congratulated on his choice of illustrations, most of them humorous, not least those borrowed from the Japanese press. Moreover, the reader in Europe who still doubts whether the Japanese can laugh at themselves is refuted by the cover which Chuokoron-sha have chosen for this paperback. This is a cartoon in colour of a bespectacled, grumpy samurai in helmet and full armour, with two swords and a strong bow, riding towards the reader on a (Suzuki?) motorbike.

merits in his friend's work. He was a draftsman in the finest oriental and occidental traditions; in his earlier works he was accurate and delicate. But great? Somehow one gets the impression that Salz has his doubts about Foujita's greatness and when he comes to those compositions which were executed after Foujita's reception into the Church he is obliged sadly to admit that there was a failure of inspiration. Understandably, we are not shown any of the religious frescoes from the chapel of our Lady of Peace in Rheims, nor does Salz reproduce those canvases in which Foujita celebrated the military glory of Japan from 1941 until 1944, and yet one must regret the absence of two such unexpected chapters in the painter's life.

The 1920s stand at the worst possible distance in time for us to be fair to their art. Salz makes a case for Foujita but fails to convince; and it may be that he fails because the taste of our time does not permit us to be as indulgent or as perceptive as we might be. But it must also be said that he is too honest a critic not to express his doubts and reservations. Those of us who cannot admire this painter are unlikely to be converted by his words. Those who still believe in the greatness of Foujita may perhaps be disappointed by so cautious an advocate.

## The crime of the commanders

By Geoffrey Best

LAWRENCE TAYLOR:

A Trial of Generals:  
Homma, Yamashita, MacArthur  
236pp. New York: Icarus Press.  
\$39.95.  
0 89651 775 6

When Moise Tshombe escaped with his life from Katanga, his successors in office and power demanded that he be returned from his north African sanctuary "for a Nuremberg trial". That was not the idea of "Nuremberg" held among the "western" members of the victorious anti-fascist coalition which mounted the famous trials there, but it was no doubt the idea most commonly to be found in the world afterwards. Why go to all the trouble and expense of putting defeated enemy leaders in the dock unless it was to display their guilt and pave their way to punishment? The Soviet Union, of course, approached the event with this in mind, and so also must have done many in the "west". Nazism, after all, really was extraordinarily evil. But liability, principle and politics proved too much for them: habits of "fair play", forgiveness and forgetfulness; principles of liberal constitutionalism; and in the background, slow and secretive but sure enough as the first frosts of the Cold War began to bite, a sense of impending role-reversal. Of the twenty-two representative Nazis and German military leaders picked to stand trial at Nuremberg proper - the International Military Tribunal, that is, not the hardly less important American-run trials which took place there subsequently - three got off scot-free and four whom the Russians would have hanged were sentenced to less than life imprisonment.

Nuremberg proper, with all its admitted defects and confusions, was in fact a noble exercise of constructive idealism, conceived and carried out in a much more creditable way than might have been expected. The International Military Tribunal at Tokyo a year or so later, which tried to do the same for the Far East, suffered from similar defects and confusions and to a somewhat greater extent invited the charge of being "victors' justice"; but it was not disreputably conceived or conducted. Nor were many of the war crimes trials conducted under the victors' own national jurisdictions (the "Belsen trial" by the British, the "Extermination Squad trial" by the Americans, the "Oradour trial" by the French, and so on); the law of war, however patchy, can now be seen to have been fortified by them.

Lawrence Taylor, an experienced American lawyer and legal writer, analyses these specifications with admirable clarity. They were not, perhaps, as fundamentally bad and inexcusable as he makes out, but they certainly made things difficult for the defence, and they were carefully calculated to give the panels of five generals charged with delivering judgment a sense that MacArthur was breathing impatiently down their necks. But what was more troubling to the juridically sensitive, and what has made these trials so controversial ever since, was the doctrine asserted in them, that a commanding officer is responsible for every action of his subordinates, whether carried out according to his command and with his knowledge, or not.

Part of their peculiarity lies in their having been set up by a peculiar sort of soldier, that "American

Caesar", General Douglas MacArthur. One of the United States' most senior soldiers, noted not least for the chivalric ideals he delighted publicly to claim for his profession, vain and sometimes self-deluding but charismatic and courageous, he had been in military command of the Philippines at the time of the Japanese assault in late 1941, and he had lost them. "I will return", he promised; and return he did, at the head of a vast Allied armada, adequately backed by newsmen, at the end of 1944. In charge of the Japanese forces was General Yamashita, only recently arrived from Manchukuo where he had been cooling his heels since his remarkable seizure of Singapore three years before. Inferior in numbers and equipment, dispersed and increasingly disordered, the Japanese fought with their accustomed tenacity but to little effect. By the time their Emperor's surrender allowed them at last to follow suit (in mid-August 1945), they had been pushed back into the mountains and forests, and their conqueror had moved on to the capture of Japan itself. On the same day that Yamashita himself surrendered, September 2, MacArthur received his country's submission in Tokyo Bay.

Prominent by then in the mind not only of MacArthur but also of every other American, and of a great many western Europeans too, were horror, amazement and indignation at the scale and nature of the atrocities found to have been committed wherever Japan had conquered and occupied; and with that horror and indignation, of course, came an urgent desire that the guilty should be punished. The victorious allies baying long since determined to satisfy that wholly justifiable desire by public judicial processes, it was to be such that MacArthur immediately turned to deal with the atrocities which had affected him most closely - those committed in his beloved Philippines. While one of his offices set to work on a laborious Tokyo "Nuremberg" for major alleged criminals, another office was commissioned to bring all the others more quickly to trial before US military courts set up under MacArthur's supreme authority and according to his specifications.

Lawrence Taylor, an experienced American lawyer and legal writer, analyses these specifications with admirable clarity. They were not, perhaps, as fundamentally bad and inexcusable as he makes out, but they certainly made things difficult for the defence, and they were carefully calculated to give the panels of five generals charged with delivering judgment a sense that MacArthur was breathing impatiently down their necks. But what was more troubling to the juridically sensitive, and what has made these trials so controversial ever since, was the doctrine asserted in them, that a commanding officer is responsible for every action of his subordinates, whether carried out according to his command and with his knowledge, or not.

That very dreadful thing was done by the Japanese forces in the Philippines under the command of Homma in 1941-42 and of Yamashita in 1944-45, no one could doubt - except, curiously and significantly,

those generals themselves when first told about them. (Their doubts were soon dispelled by irresistible evidence.) The diffused atrocity of the "Death March" of the American and Filipino prisoners in early 1942 through Bataan to their places of captivity was awful, as was the condition of the much diminished numbers of prisoners still alive when MacArthur's return rescued them nearly three years later. But even worse in the sombre calendar of war atrocities was what the crumbling Japanese forces did to the Filipino population during their last demoralized months among them, and in particular what they did to Manila and its people before immolating themselves in its ruins. About 60,000 civilians of both sexes and all ages were butchered in a most brutal fashion - a deed that was immediately labelled, with sonic justice, "the Rape of Manila".

At their trials, Homma and Yamashita and their defence counsel (who enjoyed, it should be said, complete freedom of speech) claimed that they had neither ordered nor known of these atrocities. Among the reasons they advanced for this were that they were preoccupied elsewhere, that their difficulties were enormous, that their chains of command were defective, that their nominal subordinates had proved unfaithful, that war was war, and so on. It was perhaps not very edifying and it might not have been thought to reflect creditably on the Japanese army and navy (it was in fact naval personnel who were responsible for most of the slaughter in Manila), but so far as Homma and Yamashita personally were concerned it was true, and by the end of their trials (of which the author provides a convincing picture) everyone had to believe that they had not ordered these atrocities, and had known little or nothing about them. Nevertheless it was held by the courts that they ought to have anticipated and prevented them. In the words of the judgment on Yamashita, they "failed to provide effective control of [their] troops as was required by the circumstances". An appeal on Yamashita's behalf to the US Supreme Court having failed, he was hanged in February 1946; Homma was shot in April; and a new doctrine of "command responsibility" was thus added to the melting-pot into which the laws of war had been thrown after 1945.

Generals Homma and Yamashita are presented in this volume as noble and sympathetic losers, much wronged by a prejudiced and self-indulgent victor. It is indeed impossible, both for believers in the rule of law and to regret MacArthur's prepotence, and for any reader of these pages (which seem to rest upon a modest bibliography of English-language publications) not to understand that when he initiated these prosecutions he, like no doubt the bulk of American and Filipino peoples, believed these Japanese commanders to have been more directly responsible than the evidence produced in court showed them to have

been. It looks very much as if, whatever their responsibility had been, they were going to be found guilty in any case; and therefore that the great idea of justice was being dragged in the mud. This was an aspect of the Yamashita case which particularly impressed the two Justices of the Supreme Court, Murphy and Rutledge, who dissented from the majority judgment of six that there was no cause for them to intervene. Rutledge flatly denied that this had been "a trial in the traditions of the common law and the Constitution"; Murphy put his finger on the motives which might have explained such a departure when he remarked that "An uncurbed spirit of revenge and retribution, masked in formal legal procedure for purposes of dealing with a fallen enemy commander, can do more lasting harm [to the US, to posterity, etc.] than all of the atrocities giving rise to that spirit".

This is not to say, however, that the defendants should have got off scot-free, as their counsel came to think then and as Taylor thinks still. An irony in these cases, which has evidently much contributed to his passionate interest in them, is that Generals Homma and Yamashita were actually among the most moderate and decent of their kind. Though exceedingly competent at their professional work, both were disliked by the Prime Minister, General Tojo, and his aggressive-minded party, because both had been men of moderation in the 1930s, concerned especially to keep their country from becoming embroiled in war with the United States and the European empires. Homma and Yamashita in fact were both, by Japanese army standards, "softies" and, by Euro-American standards, gentlemen; and the elder Homma "looked a gentleman" too, though the chunky bull-necked Yamashita, whose sobriquet "the Tiger of Malaya" it was too easy to misconstrue, unfortunately did not. Of all high-ranking officers in the Japanese armed forces it is doubtful whether any less deserved to be made the first examples of the indignant victors' justice, and Taylor not unreasonably devotes his early chapters to extolling his subjects' virtues and to working up sympathy on their behalf. His case would have carried more weight had it not been written in prose at times so over-lush that Homma's plain little poems come as welcome relief.

But was "command responsibility", after all, such an unreasonable doctrine to assert? And had not these generals some responsibility for what happened? Admittedly the doctrine was new when MacArthur and his army lawyers produced it (after consultations with Washington? Taylor has not gone into that at all), and he might have reflected that his own kind would hardly bless him for having done so, their personal responsibilities in war being thereby so much the more increased. But the fact is that after some more useful applications in other war crimes trials it became a more or less regular part of armed forces' law in the

United States and many other countries, including our own, to such an extent that, later, American defenders of their country's conduct of the war in Vietnam found it difficult to explain why the standards applied to Yamashita and Homma should not be applied to Abrams and Westmoreland. If they didn't know what kind of a war was actually going on under their command, they ought to have known!

It is possible that had Homma and Yamashita been brought to trial after "Nuremberg" had got well under way, they would have benefited from the plea of "mitigating circumstances" so regularly entered thereafter. Some leniency on those grounds might in any case have been extended, if their judges had been drawn from the combat zone rather than the office-desk. They were made to pay too high a penalty. But that is not to say they should have paid no penalty at all. Guilt by association should not concern upholders of the rule of law, but persistent maintenance of a guilty association may be legitimate cause for unease. The Japanese army of the 1930s and early 1940s was in many respects a dangerous and nasty organization, its noble, chivalrous and honourable parts smothered by association with its brutality, ruthlessness, fanaticism, fanatical, deliberately cultivated ignorance of the outside world, and racist contempt for the victims of the imperialist aggressiveness of its political leaders. Homma and Yamashita tried to dissociate themselves from the latter when their irrational ambitions led them to attack the United States, but they shared the common belief of their officer caste that it was all right to carve out a Japanese empire in China, where at least four million are reckoned to have died at Japanese hands between 1937 and 1945, and where the conduct of the Japanese army set an early example of atrocities which no European army (the German SD and SS proper were not an army) ever matched. American and European prisoners were generally treated better by the Japanese than were Chinese, Filipinos and other despised fellow-Asians, but 27 per cent of them nevertheless died in captivity (as against 4 per cent of those taken prisoner by Germany). Many survivors retained to the end of their days - days all too often shortened by their experiences - ineradicable impressions that the Japanese army included, along with its better elements and traditions, some exceptionally bad ones; so bad, so often deliberately cruel and heartless, that they were, by European and American standards, almost inexplicable.

That was the army to which Generals Homma and Yamashita were distinguished commanding officers; and it may still be asked, as General MacArthur must have asked himself thirty-six years ago, whether they should not be held in some measure responsible for the way their armies behaved, whether they expressly ordered it or not, since such was by then well known - like it or not - to be their normal style.

## The arts of charming

By Quentin Bell

JEAN SELZ:  
Foujita  
96pp. Bonfin Press, £4.95.

If you are one of those who enjoy and admire the works of Foujita - and there are many who do - you will also enjoy this book. There are many illustrations, the colour reproductions are very convincing; the text by Jean Selz is agreeable and although he may not satisfy this artist's most ardent admirers, he does tell them a great deal, and much that they are unlikely to know.

But for those of us who have for the past fifty years or so felt a distrust mounting almost to dislike for the work of Foujita, the interest of this little book is historical rather than critical. The artist arouses our curiosity because he is remarkable, not as a painter, but as a phenomenon. He stands as an example of the stranger who, coming from another culture, learns with deliberate brilliance to adapt his own deft manual skills to the needs of the European market.

Foujita left Japan and came to

Paris before 1914 and, for a brief period painted careful pastiches of the Douanier Rousseau, pastiches which had something of Utrillo about them and something also which suggested a quiet and genuine observation of nature. After many wanderings he returned to France, became a Catholic, died and was buried in his adopted country.

But the period of his greatest efflorescence and success was that of the interwar years; it was then that he seemed most completely to adorn the scene, one found his work in every shop window of the Rue de Seine and the Rue de la Boétie. He seemed to belong and in some sort of way even to have created that gilded age of the Ecole de Paris which followed the "heroic days" of the Fauves and the Cubists; the age when those struggling young artists had become prosperous and middle-aged, when modern art had "arrived" and in arriving had lost something en route. It was an age when we became andly aware that we had nothing to put in its place.

Great liberties had been won, such as the freedom to paint as you pleased unfettered by nature or by tradition. But many of the pioneers seemed, when they could at last please themselves, to have no end

but to please others, that is to say to please a public with expensive tastes. Derain, Dufy, Marie Laurencin and Vlaminck seemed now to devote themselves to the art of charming. They cultivated a kind of decorative prettiness which was very acceptable to a wealthy public - and until 1929 there was indeed a wealthy public at hand. There were still some giants in our midst, relics of a former age who had remained incorruptible but it did appear that their epoch was over and we had entered the era of the epigoni. France was still, in our imaginations, the metropolis of the visual arts, the home of all that was new and honest; but it began to seem that she had exhausted herself after a century and more of splendid innovations.

Foujita was not to blame for any of this but his enormous success was a symptom of our malady, he seemed the very type and symbol of that hectic and barren epoch, he belonged to it entirely, he offered it a gift for attractive colour, a flair for the kind of self-statement which seemed to combine all that was most charmingly affective in oriental and Parisian elegance. He was supremely decorative, wonderfully articulate, prolific in seductive phrases, richly eloquent in his pictorial language and poor only in that he had abso-

lutely nothing to say that was of the slightest importance. He was just what Paris wanted in the 1920s, that city which Selz evokes in nostalgic phrases, the city of the Surrealist Manifesto, the Boeuf sur le toit, Harry's New York Bar and Le Café du Dome.

Jean Selz is a gifted and perceptive critic and here he is devoting a monograph to Foujita in a series which includes such names as Degas, Cézanne, Picasso and Turner. But can he, one asks oneself as one opens this slim but glossy volume, can he mount so spirited a defence of his subject that we shall have to admit that we were wrong about Foujita after all; wrong too it may be, about Paris in the 1920s? Certainly he has the advantage of knowing his subject well. He knew the artist personally and he has studied his works with attention. He tells us that Foujita was an amiable, modest, unpretentious person with a catholic taste in girls. He was unsophisticated by success, his tastes and his affections were simple and sincere; he was afflicted with a not unsympathetic inability to deal with his income tax; one would have liked to have known him. All this is nicely expressed and one believes in it. But was Foujita a great artist? Selz never altogether answers this question. He finds great

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## The asymmetrical archipelago

By James Kirkup

HIROAKI SATO and BURTON  
WATSON (Editors and translators:  
From the Country of Eight Islands  
An Anthology of Japanese Poetry  
652pp. New York: Anchor Press/  
Doubleday. \$9.95.  
0 385 14030 4

In his excellent introduction to this truly monumental anthology, Thomas Rimer, discussing the classic eighth-century compilation, the *Manyōshū*, stresses what has always appeared to be the outstanding merit of Japanese poetry:

Nor was the composition of poetry reserved to particular gifted individuals. Rather, poetry was a part of daily life, a means of expression for anyone who felt the need to manifest emotion through ordered language.

This is still true, even in the materialist and utilitarian Japan of today, where, despite a revival of interest in traditional culture which includes the writing of *haiku* and *tanka*, pure literature seems to take a back seat behind the more visual arts of fashion design, flower arrangement and the tea ceremony.

Dr Rimer also mentions the "openness, directness of expression, and intensity of feeling" in the *Manyōshū*, and says such qualities were true to the national character. This could hardly be said of the present-day "national character" of the Japanese in general, but certainly it is still true of her artists and poets, and in this volume we find many moving expressions of those vital poetic qualities, most strikingly in the modern age that may be said to begin with Hagiwara Sakurako's collection *Tsuki ni hoeru* (*Howling of the Moon*, University of Tokyo Press) of 1917.

In considering the nature of Japanese poetry, and indeed all poetry of the East, we must abandon most of our Western preconceptions of what good poetry must be. Analytical approaches, "practical criticism" and so on have no place here. Perhaps this is one reason why the poetry of the Orient is so little appreciated, at least by British poets, who look back with a wary eye upon the Imagists, Ezra Pound, Lafcadio Hearn, Yone Noguchi and Amy Lowell.

We can begin to understand the differences between Western and Japanese poetry if we study carefully all aspects of Japanese art, with its sense of imbalance, balance in composition, and its reverberating "empty" spaces that are like speaking silences. Western poetry is symmetrical, Japanese poetry asymmetrical. In this respect, Japanese poetry closely resembles Japanese painting, composition and design.

We find asymmetry in those

almost dizzyingly oblique perspectives of the *Genji Monogatari* and other classical scrolls, in the dislocated (and dislocating) compositions of wood-block prints and *kakemono* — the sliding, insecure effect of tilted verandas, sloping mats on which figures lean and float rather than sit or stand; they are somehow not quite earthbound in their capzoring universe. In the miraculous *shunga*, the exquisite erotic fantasies created by Utamaro and other classical artists (and still forbidden by the censor in Japan), we revel in extremes of physical sensation and heights of harmonious displacement.

So it is advisable to adopt an oblique approach to the East, though this can be difficult or impossible for many rationalist Western minds. The archipelago of Japan is itself oblique, laid aslant the globe as it were, and it seems as if the light falls in a unique way in those islands, creating new outlines and unexpected relationships between things, and giving colours and shadows an unusual intensity never found in Britain, a poignant immediacy that underlines the impermanence of life, the fleeting nature of "this floating world". This is evident in all Japanese poetry, so full of the changing lights of nature and the seasons. It is why, instead of confronting a Japanese poem head-on one has to insinuate oneself into the mood as well as the meaning of the work, whether in reading or in translation. One has to observe the pauses, the tilted hesitations, and above all the silences implicit in the apparently most clear and forthright statements; to remember that when a Japanese says "Yes" he often means "No", and that when he smiles or laughs it is sometimes an expression of shock, pain, sorrow or embarrassment. One has always to read between the lines, and between the words, and between the characters.

This is what the present translators do most admirably. Dr Rimer quotes Burton Watson on a *tanka* by Sennin, on the subtle ambiguities of sound and sense, the delicate play on words, the repetitions of certain consonants and particles; here is the poem:

Kore ya kono  
yuku mo kazu mo  
wakaretsutsu  
shiru mo shiranu mo  
Ausake no seki

This is the spot —  
where those going, those returning  
take their leave,  
those who know each other, those who  
don't —  
the barrier at Meeting Slope.

And the translator comments:  
It is euphony and musical resonances of this type, and the intrinsic flowing quality of the language, rather than elaborate prosodic devices, that in most cases account for the particular appeal of Japanese poetry in the original. In this magnificent collection, which includes poems from the aristocratic times to the present day, we find that the translators, as well as seeking to be faithful to the originals, have produced versions that, as far as possible in English, preserve those resonances, and this despite the fact that Watson sometimes leaves *makuro kotoba*, the set phrases of "pillow words", untranslated — a practice Sato deplores. But these translators are not self-centred. Translation, particularly from the often imprecise language of Japanese, involves the art of choosing to use what most people would consider to be unimportant words — choosing between a definite and an indefinite article, between plural and singular nouns and verbs. Such discrimination demands mastery of English, and Sato is one of the very rare Japanese who can use English vocabulary and poetic style with originality and confidence; I have long been an admirer of his dazzling versions of modern Japanese poets, particularly Takahashi Mutsuo's *Poems of a Penitent* (Chicago Review Press) and from the same press Tomioka Taeko's *See You Soon* — she is one of the outstanding new women poets represented in this volume.

One of the revelations of this anthology is the presentation of the art of *renga*, most recently discussed illuminatingly by Earl Miner in his book *Japanese Linked Poetry* (Princeton University Press). The collaboration of several poets in the composition of a long, linked poem may seem improbable to British poets, but the pleasures of making such group poems are particularly intense. One of the largest sections in *From the Country of Eight Islands* is entitled "The Age of Renga". By the fourteenth century, the division of the formal 31-syllable *tanka* into two smaller parts of 5-7 and 7-7 syllables encouraged the development of the *renga* form and the more popular *haikai*. In this anthology most of the *haikai* and *tanka* and *renga* translations are printed in nine-line form.

Modern and contemporary Japanese poets have always been strongly influenced by Western verse, sometimes rather consciously, as in the case of Nishiwaki Junzaburō and that of Tanikawa Shuntarō. At first English and American poetry, but then more strikingly French Dadaist and Surrealist and Italian Futurist poetry became assimilated. But in the very best modern Japanese poets, there is always that disconcerting, elusive, hauntingly unique native imagery and tone, even in a work as properly upsetting as Takahashi Mutsuo's vision of sexual ecstasy in the "glory hole" of a "meo's room", in which his Roman Catholicism and his homosexual guilt and passion are miraculously wedded.

The frank imbalance of the impassioned vision in many modern Japanese poems is partly the result of the use of "free verse"; lack of rhyme is yet another "asymmetrical" element in Japanese forms. When Japanese poets first start to write poetry in English — as many now do — they seem obsessed by the desire to compose in rhyme, and it is not until they have gone beyond this stage and begin to write in more liberated modern forms that they are able to develop as truly Japanese English, as opposed to jangled poets. In the same way, translators who attempt to put Japanese poetry into rhyme lose that asymmetrical balance, as can be seen in the versions of Hagiwara Sakurako and other poets by Graeme Wilson and Atsushi Ikuo, whose sickly chiming rhymes disfigure Hagiwara's off-beat tone: Hiroaki Sato made no such mistake in his own translations of the wonderful poet *Howling of the Moon*.

Finally, it is a sad fact that in the Acknowledgements, among the many magazines listed, from *Portland Review* to *Gay Sunshine*, there is not a single British publication. It is a single British publication that surely time for British poets to break out of the present academic domestic-provincial mode of so much of our modern verse, and embrace newer, wider, more liberating influences.

## The free ways of Arthur Waley

By Edward Seidensticker

I have always liked what Sir George Sanson wrote about Arthur Waley in a footnote to *Japan: A Short Cultural History*. Having been informed that *The Tale of Genji* "is a remarkable romance which it is difficult to describe without superlatives", we jump to the footnote:

And unnecessarily, for Mr Arthur Waley's translation is masterly, and itself comes very near to being a work of creative genius. Is it ungrateful to add that perhaps it does more than justice to the original — not because of any shortcomings in Murasaki, but because modern English is incomparably richer, stronger, more various and supple than Heian Japanese?

I will limit myself to the *Genji* translation, for it is the only considerable translation by Waley which I feel competent to discuss. The most obvious thing about it is that it is very well written, and if by "masterly" is meant that it gives great pleasure, then the adjective is just apt. Waley is often called a poet. More than one discussion of his work has come close to describing him as the only poet in a European language who has worked with the languages of East Asia.

Few would take exception to Sanson's praise. It may be that modern English is not always rich, strong, various, and supple, but that it is these things in the hands of certain writers. Waley was among them. This judgment has become standard, and need not be elaborated upon.

To some of us it may seem that though Waley wrote well he did not write uniquely well. Some of his more ornate writing — and his *Genji* is, by spells, very ornate — have taken on a certain dated quality not to be discerned in the works of people who wrote much earlier than he did. There is at least one respect, however, in which he does seem unique. Not touched upon by Sanson, it is his work as a pioneer, as explorer.

The first person to venture into an unknown expense is always unique. His tracks are there, changing the expense for everyone who ventures in afterwards. It may seem curious to describe Waley so, for European studies of East Asian literature did not begin with him. The work of such Victorians as Basil Hall Chamberlain is of a very high quality, and much of it has not been superseded. They all belong to the tradition, however, in which Sanson too may be put: missionaries, diplomats, they all lived in and had professional bonds with East Asia, and so, while the depth of their commitment to their studies is not to be doubted, those studies were the amateur half of their lives.

Waley's studies, and the books he made from them, were his life. He was probably the first European man of letters to undertake what was then and for decades afterwards thought a most unrealistic task, the mastering of a Far Eastern language. He studied most of them, and his command of classical Chinese and classical Japanese had scarcely a rival — in a day when a smattering of one or the other was deemed all that could be expected of a cultured person other than a native speaker.

It would perhaps be rash to say that Waley was the first non-Oriental to read the whole of the *Genji*. Yet balance, as can be seen in the sections of *Howling of the Moon* and other poets by Graeme Wilson and Atsushi Ikuo, whose sickly chiming rhymes disfigure Hagiwara's off-beat tone: Hiroaki Sato made no such mistake in his own translations of the wonderful poet *Howling of the Moon*.

Today, the *Genji* is familiar enough in America (and it may be more familiar yet in England) to appear occasionally in New York advertisements. Probably only *haiku*, among the literary products of the Japanese, enjoys similar currency. *Haiku* tends to be treated as if it were aphorism, which it is not. The things that are

said about the *Genji* and its author are equally misleading. Yet there it is, in a medium which demands of its jargon that it speak to large numbers of people.

For this state of affairs Waley may be given most of the credit. Before him the consensus was that the *Genji* was a bore. W. G. Aston, who wrote the first history of Japanese literature in English, admitted that he had not been able to get through it. Sir Ernest Satow was of the view that it was "only of value as marking a stage in the development of the language". Chamberlain's characterization was more spirited and no less hostile: "If the authors of the *Genji Monogatari*, though lauded to the skies by her compatriots, has been branded by Georges Bousquet as *cette ennuyeuse Semblance japonaise*, she surely richly deserves it."

The trouble doubtless was that these early readers did not really read, they deciphered. A necessary condition for enjoying any long work of prose is that one read it at a certain speed. We can only guess at the speed with which the young Waley pushed through it. What is certain is that he thought it worth spending a decade and more on, and so, because his translation reads so well, he made it possible for the world to read it at a good pace. The impression of tedium and intolerable length faded away. It hardly seems possible that the Victorian world would have been so hostile had those early students been able to read it in fluent, rhythmic English.

So Waley's fame is deserved, and people aware of what he accomplished would not wish it to pass. The fact remains that certain questions may properly be asked about his translating practices.

Translating has few rules. Downright error, the substituting, let us say, of a positive statement for a negative, is of course deplorable. Aside from that, almost anything goes, or at least an attempt can be made to justify it. Though I have not seen the statement in print, I have heard close friends of Waley's say that he justified the freedom of certain of his translations on the grounds that much is lost in the translation of any complex literary work, and something must therefore be added to replace it. This is a bold doctrine.

Almost any literary translator would agree that the struggle to find substitutes for locutions untranslatable to direct translation is a continuing one. "A needle in a haystack" means nothing at all when rendered literally into Japanese, and "after all" or "when all is said and done" may mean something, but not what they mean in English. The translator who does not recognize these facts is merely irresponsible.

The PEN American Center recently issued *A Translator's Model Contract*. It offers a sensible view of what the translator should be up to: "The translation should be a faithful rendition of the work into English. It shall neither omit anything from the original text nor add anything to it other than such slight verbal changes as are necessary in translating (original language) into English."

However matters may be with his Chinese translations and his shorter translations from Japanese, Waley's *Genji* cannot be made to fit this statement of purpose and duty. He cuts boldly and he elaborates ingeniously. The boldest of his excursions is one whole chapter, about two-thirds of the way through the tale. The elaboration is continuous.

I like Sanson's first sentence, gracefully bestowing praise that is well deserved. I like the second sentence better. It could have been made a simple declaration, but the interrogative form brings rich ambiguity. There is an imputation of ingratitude, but at whom is the possible ingratitude directed? Is it Murasaki Shikibu, who would have written for the modern audience? There is the other edge, however: An extraordinary society produced the *Genji*, which loses a part of its meaning if cut off from the concerns of that society. The patience of both

I like to think that, once more gracefully, of course, Sanson is child-like Waley, saying to him, "It was beautifully done, old fellow, but you should not have done it." Waley embarrasses very nicely, and some of the excursions are far from infelicitous; but he should have desisted.

To the conscientious translator, the assertion that he has improved upon his original may not seem un-mixed praise. He should not have wanted to improve. He should have wanted to do the faithful mimic, reproducing everything in the original that caught his eye, his heart, and sometimes his disavowal. To avoid infidelity in the guise of improvement is not easy, a fact which few people who have not worked at translation seem to understand.

A sonnet or a haiku may sometimes be perfect, syllabic of it in be improved upon. An extended work of prose fiction rarely is. Rare is the translator who never comes upon a detail he wishes he could wish away. I can imagine translators wishing that, in perhaps the nearest to perfection of all English novels, Mr Knightley's proposal to Emma was a bit more laconic, a bit more Jane-like. *The Genji* is full of flaws. The translator can see that Waley was often a victim of impatience and boredom, and that his "improvement" was a quick means of getting past it. At such times fidelity can be difficult.

The problem is complicated. A translation can be faithful in all matters of detail, putting nothing in and cutting nothing out, and yet be unfaithful in sum. This is certainly true when a brisk and sprightly work is turned into something ploddingly dull, or when a humorous work is deprived of humour because the conventions of one system have been lost and nothing has been done to replace them with those of another. It becomes necessary to look more closely at Waley's free ways with his original.

Exception may be taken to one detail of the PEN "model contract". It is in the matter of excisions. There is such a thing as an abridged translation. Abridgment can be necessary and proper. The circumstances of publication in the second language do not always accord with those of the first. A condition seems necessary, however, the fact that any translation is incomplete should be made quite clear. Waley may have made the matter clear somewhere in the course of his *Genji* debate, but it is not mentioned in the edition which is currently available. Indeed there is at least one apology for what may seem a lacuna in the translation, in fact a lacuna in the original, and with it a strong suggestion that Waley himself would not be guilty of lacunae.

The more important question is whether the process of excising has resulted in something deeply and subtly closer to the original translation than a complete translation would have been. It may be argued that in deleting matters of interest to Murasaki Shikibu's audience but highly unlikely to interest the modern English reader, Waley did what Murasaki Shikibu would have done had she had Waley's audience.

Sometimes the argument can be made persuasively, but it is double-edged. There can be no doubt that Murasaki Shikibu was writing for a society obsessed with rank, office, and ritual, and perhaps most of all with dress, that accompaniment of rank, and with the hues and combinations that revealed superior and less than superior taste. There may be small pockets of modern English and American society that have similar preoccupations, but the details of the Japanese thing are alien and hence boring. Therefore Waley has made of the work something which, because not boring, is hearer what Murasaki Shikibu would have written for the modern audience. There is the other edge, however: An extraordinary society produced the *Genji*, which loses a part of its meaning if cut off from the concerns of that society. The patience of both

reader and translator can properly be taxed a little if the subtleties and complexities of that society are to be present.

Waley was bored with ritual and clothes, and expected his readers to be bored too, so he cut many descriptions of them. Many of the bolder excisions are not so easily explained, nor is it easy to argue that by making them he was more faithful to his original. He translated the three worst chapters in the tale, those following immediately upon Genji's death. One of them, the last of the three and the forty-fourth of the full fifty-four, is so unsatisfactory that it is widely held to be spurious. Whatever may be the scholarly arguments for this view, and they are impressive, one simply does not wish to believe that it came from the hand of the great lady. The chapter which Waley cut, on the other hand, seems very clearly hers. The thirty-eight chapters (and in his numbering of the chapters Waley gives no indication of having omitted one), it does little to advance the action. Yet it is of great lyrical beauty and emotional complexity.

On a beautiful autumn evening, as the insects of early autumn sing, there are three quiet interviews, between Genji and his young wife, who has become a nun, between Genji and a former emperor who is his natural son, though no more than three or four people in the world know of the secret, and between Genji and the emperor's consort, who wishes to become a nun. It is difficult to see why Waley should have wished to make the cut, and still more difficult to argue that in making it he improved upon his original. He dispensed with subtlety and delicacy, the more important for coming just before the great sorrow of Genji's life and his disappearance from the action.

There are lesser excisions which are no less difficult to understand. One from many examples will suffice. It is representative. The forty-first chapter, the last one in which Genji is seen, requires getting used to, but when one has read it a few times it can come to seem among the most beautiful in the whole long story. It is a reversion to an earlier form, a collection of anecdotes centred upon poems, and it is that for the purpose to echo happier days in Genji's life and take us back to the beginning, a cycle being near completion. The chapter sees us through the first full year of Genji's bereavement, the great love of his life having died in the preceding chapter. At the end of it he prepares to "leave the world", by which is meant to take holy orders. At the beginning of the next chapter he is dead.

The beauty comes in large measure from the review of the seasons, each given its poems, as in a courtly anthology. At a crucial point Waley slashes. He does it to a passage that contains seven poems, and sees the seasons and Genji from early summer to late autumn. The progression of the seasons is rudely interrupted. The chapter title, which means something like "wizard" or "magician", derives from one of the poems, in allusion to "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" by Po Chü-i.

New layers of time and tradition and memory are imposed by the allusion: the word "wizard" occurs only one other time in the tale, when the infant Genji's mother dies, and his father is put in mind of the same poem; and there is a nostalgic heartening back to the most powerful of all stimuli on the culture of high Heian, and to the most celebrated bereavement in the whole of Chinese history. Waley called the chapter "The Mirage". This is very nice, an apt simile for the fading away of Genji. Perhaps Waley cut the poem to make his favoured title the more easy of accommodation. Whether or not it is adequate cause for cutting so much from Genji's last days is another matter.

Instances of amplification, of subtly redefining the original, are to be found on almost every page. Sometimes it is difficult to know what is

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amplification or redefinition of what is merely error, unconstruction of the original. Sometimes the changes are important, sometimes they are not. An instance of the important sort is in Waley's version of the relations between Genji and the young wife of his late years, her whom he visits near the beginning of the chapter that Waley omitted. She has a child by the son of Genji's best friend, Waley's Genji suspects the truth immediately upon learning of her pregnancy. "At this late date!" is the general meaning of the remark with which he greets the news. He speaks the words, and this fact is very important. He would remain silent if his doubts were about the immediately preceding chapter, making it unlikely or impossible that the child is his. The thoughts that follow have to do with the strangeness of such an event so late in his life, when he has had so few children by other ladies.

In Murasaki, Genji does not guess the truth. He discovers it with shocking clarity when he comes upon a letter to the young princess, his wife, from the young man. An intensely dramatic climax in the original thus becomes anti-climax in the Waley version. Some may say that his story is better, that it speaks more successfully to the reader of our day if Genji is made to suffer agonizing suspicions before learning the truth. What is clear is that the two stories are different.

It is sometimes said that the richness of the fabric which Waley weaves is a successful imitation of, or surrogate for, the original - that the long periods and slow rhythms of the Waley style respond to stylistic beauties in the original as a plainer English would not. I suspect that most of those who say this do not know what they are talking about.

Among the hazards of translation is being criticized by people who cannot know what the process of translating has been. It is rather as if a critic were to reproach a singer of Hindemith for striking false notes, and not know about all those strange intervals in the score. It is very much like the easy journalism which says that someone or other speaks fluent Burmese when the reporter does not himself know a word of Burmese. Not many people in the West (or in Japan for that matter) know Heian Japanese, and not many, therefore, are in a position to say whether a rich style or a plain style better imitates a work in that language.

Among those who can read Heian Japanese there are yet fewer who can distinguish a beautiful piece of Heian prose from a careless piece. There is a hypnotic, incantatory quality about all Heian prose, largely because of the giantically negligent verbs and adjectives. Yet the fact remains that some pieces of it must have struck the original audience as better than other pieces.

It is very difficult for the modern

reader to acquire a sense of the good and the bad. Nor do we have a continuing tradition to rely upon. When, some two centuries after its composition, people started commenting on the *Genji*, its language was already withdrawing into the distance, becoming difficult to understand. No one said anything about prose style, moreover, and indeed until recently almost no one has. The view of modern Japanese scholarship is mixed. There is no consensus that the style is masterly.

All we can really do is compare, and the conclusion seems inescapable that the *Genji* is more carefully written than its great rival, *The Pillow Book*. It must have been admired, and the tradition of *Genji* appreciation is indeed unbroken one, for reasons other than its style. No modern admirer has to puzzle long over what those reasons might have been. So it comes to seem that, whatever its merits in its own right, the Waley style is of doubtful validity as imitation of the original.

Waley's achievements are very great, and there are scarcely any rules about translation that everyone accepts. What can be said is that, in the light of certain principles, certain inquiries seem valid. In addition to rendering the praise that Waley most certainly deserved, this article must mean only to suggest questions that may properly and without disrespect be asked about his translating practices.

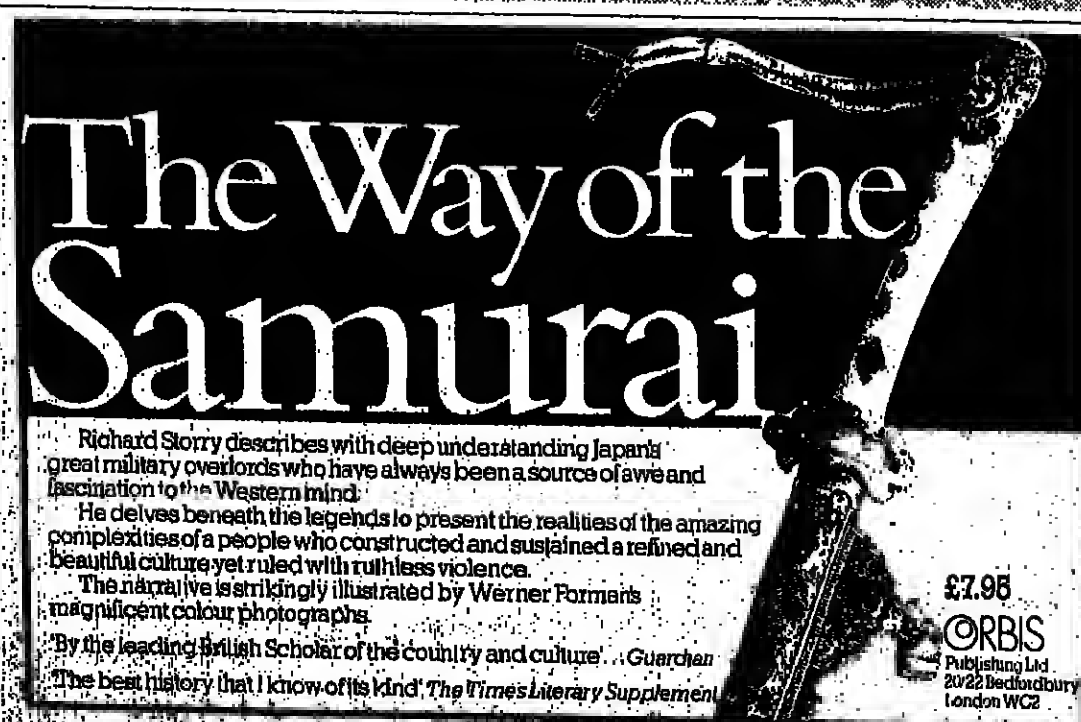
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## The transitional type

By Brian Powell

P. G. O'NEILL:

An Introduction to Nô Drama  
J 1767. Exeter Tapes. The Language Centre, University of Exeter.

KINOSHITA JUNJI:

Shigosen no matsuri  
180pp Tokyo: Kawade Shobo

The driver's seat of a car in a London street at rush hour is perhaps not the best place to study *nô* drama, but Exeter Tapes' *An Introduction to Nô Drama* by P. G. O'Neill provides just such an opportunity. Of course there is nothing to prevent one listening to the same tape in the quiet comfort of one's own living room, but this series of lectures, recorded on cassettes at the University of Exeter's Language Centre and now covering a wide range of subjects, is intended also for those whose working lives normally allow them little time to pursue outside interests. Clarity of diction in the lecturer and a rigidly observed orderliness in the presentation of the material are essential, and Professor O'Neill's tape is a model of this kind.

There is nothing now in his lecture - indeed novelty would be inappropriate. O'Neill covers the history of *nô* down to modern times and explains the main elements of *nô* performances. The references to *nô* in the twentieth century are welcome because this is an aspect of the subject that is sometimes overlooked, and here one notices especially O'Neill's description of contemporary *nô* audiences. *Nô* actors are accustomed to performing before audiences almost entirely composed of people who are themselves keen amateur *nô* dancers or chanters, and it is not difficult to imagine the high level of professionalism and technical excellence that this must stimulate.

It also indicates an inwardness that might be thought inimical to living theatre. With a few celebrated exceptions, *nô* actors have been content to remain enclosed within their own world. The theatre outside meanwhile - and "outside" stretches right round the globe - has been discovering that *nô* has a universal dramatic significance that can enrich the tradition of realism on which much modern theatre is based. Not only in the West, but also in Japan, contemporary stage and film directors have tried to use elements of *nô* to achieve effects otherwise impossible. Kurosawa's *Kumonosu-jô* (*Throne of Blood*) contains several sequences which clearly had *nô* origins.

One of the most successful

## Stage styles

By C. J. Dunn

YOSHINOBU INOUE and TOSHIO KAWATAKE

The Traditional Theatre of Japan  
259pp. Tokyo and New York: Weatherhill. \$20.  
0 8348 0161 2

The Traditional Theatre of Japan, as the jacket announces, appeared ten years ago in two separate volumes, and is published with a different set of illustrations (but covering the same subjects) and slight emendations, including the incorporation of some footnotes into the text. Nevertheless the claim made that this is the first book in English to present a comprehensive history of Japanese traditional theatre is justified, even though there have been several studies of special aspects which, between them, cover the greater part of the ground.

The authors are well-known authorities in their respective fields - Professor Inoue for *nô* and *kyôgen*, and Professor Kawatake for *bunraku* and *kabuki* - and no fault is to be found in their accounts. The transla-

attempts in recent years to blend *nô* and modern drama has been Kinoshita Junji's *Shigosen no matsuri* (*The Rite of the Meritless*), published in 1979 and already presented with acclaim in two separate runs in Japan's National Theatre.

*Shigosen no matsuri* grew out of Kinoshita's experiments with choral reading of Japanese classical literature, a source of dramatic material not much exploited before by modern Japanese theatre but familiar in the *nô*. The work he chose for his new play was *Heike unanagata* (*The Tale of the Heike*), a thirteenth-century epic about the struggle of two great families for hegemony over Japan. The event which forms the core of the play is a sea battle whose outcome (defeat for the Heike) decided the course of Japanese history for the several centuries to come.

There is a lack of specificity in *nô*, both in time and in the attribution of the words to the characters. A *nô* play is often set both in the present and in the distant past, and characters who are essentially the same exist in both temporal dimensions. The words of one character may be taken over, sometimes even in mid-speech, by the chorus, and in turn the character himself may become the narrator, describing his own actions in the third person. These transitions are accepted as quite natural in the *nô* theatre; they allow the heroes to stand back from themselves, to view and (at least in Kinoshita's thinking) to confront their role in history.

Kinoshita has employed this technique in *Shigosen no matsuri*, and one of his four co-directors for the first production was a *nô* actor. A chorus recites passages from *The Tale of the Heike*, and the individual characters, some of whom step out from the chorus, then enact the scene in quasi-modern language. At certain climaxes these characters, when enacting the events, speak *verbal* lines of dialogue from the Tale.

Out of those layers of time and language emerges a picture of Japan at a crucial point in her history, defined superficially by the play as the late twelfth century but perhaps equally the 1980s. "I have seen what there is to be seen," shouts the defeated hero as he throws himself in full armour into the sea. But what has he seen? Has he simply seen power pass from one family to another? Has he watched the defeat of an old order by a new? Has he seen comic forces taking a hand in his country's destiny? The Japanese critics were not sure, and the question will be long debated. They were, however, unanimous in hailing a new form of drama that built on tradition rather than rejecting it.

## Face gained and face lost

By Christopher Thorne

PETER LOWE:

Britain in the Far East  
A survey from 1819 to the present  
260pp. Longmans. £9.95.  
0 582 48730 7

Talking to American university students about relations between the West and the Far East can give rise to a particular difficulty, in that many instinctively see the West in terms of the United States to the virtual exclusion of all other powers. Vietnam still casts a long shadow over the minds of those young people, and even when historical enquiry is pursued back beyond the Second World War, assumptions concerning the unique nature of United States-Asian relations retain sufficient strength to colour academic approaches as well as folk-history. "American-Far Eastern relations" remain a flourishing area of university studies and scholarly endeavour.

Conversely, in Britain, where much activity surrounds domestic and European history, there are few whose work centres upon relations between the West and the Far East. In the field of Oriental studies, Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, for example, has maintained the richness of the past, but among students of twentieth-century international relations, only a minority - of whom Peter Lowe is one - have followed the splendid example set by the late G. F. Hudson, whose *The Far East in World Politics*, published in 1939, is still of great value. As for British university students, the need in discussions with them tends to be the opposite of the one arising in the United States: that is, to convince them that Britain was deeply and extensively involved in Far Eastern affairs, not only before the First World War, but throughout the first half of the present century. In this respect, changes in the collective memory and in gonorrational attitudes are marked. It is not so long, after all, as Dr Lowe reminds us, since Harold Wilson was proffering the ashino judgment that Britain's frontier was "on the Himalayas".

In short, if it comes as no surprise, in historical terms, to find a Curzon preclaiming that Britain was and

would remain "the first power in the East", it can appear bizarre, and not merely over-confident, to come across a Foreign Office official writing privately in 1937 that the Japanese had become "over-insistent on their claim to a leading role in Asian affairs" and that they needed reminding "that we are a much greater Asiatic power than [they]". Or again, to turn to the perceptions of others, it can surprise a young American audience that in 1940, only a short while before Pearl Harbor, the War Department in Washington, though much opposed to Japan's attack upon China, considered that "the British Commonwealth, with its vast holdings in the Orient, has a predominant interest in maintaining China as a belligerent".

Long before this last argument was advanced, of course, Britain's position East of Suez had been under great strain. The alliance with Japan in 1902 showed that the country was increasingly unable to meet the accumulating demands upon its resources resulting from its world-wide interests, the challenges of other states, and calls for social reform at home. The existence of divergent and potentially conflicting interests between the two partners soon, however, became apparent. So, too, did the dilemma which was to last until a few days before Pearl Harbor (when Roosevelt promised that the United States would fight even if Japan attacked only British, and not American, possessions): how to remain on good terms with both Tokyo and Washington when relations between the two of them were strained or worse. The growth, too, of Chinese nationalism as demonstrated by, for example, the 4th May Movement in 1919, together with increasing Japanese pressures upon China, presented a further continuing dilemma: how to avoid antagonizing Japan, which was in a position to inflict great damage on Britain's Far Eastern trade and possessions, while demonstrating towards the "new" China sufficient sympathy to preserve British markets and investments in that country.

Britain's colonial possessions in South-East Asia seemed, before 1941, to offer fewer causes for alarm, despite the growth of

nationalist demands in Burma and continuing inter-communal tensions in Malaya. In fact, however, Britain's position in these territories was closely linked with her commercial presence in East Asia, her imperial role in India, and even her status as protector of Australia and New Zealand. The military means to counter external threats had to come from the same shrinking purse and on the basis of the same, relatively declining economy. In China, Australia, South-East Asia and India alike, the weakening of Britain's performance as an exporter contrasted with the rise of Japan's. Everywhere East of Suez, as attacks upon the rule and privileged position of the white man increased, the preservation of "face", both on the spot and in terms of the country's status as a Great Power, became if anything more important than ever.

Japan's dramatic successes in 1941-42 destroyed Britain's standing in the Far East to an extent which even the later triumphs of Slim's Fourteenth Army could not undo. The war greatly hastened the end of the colonial empire in South-East Asia and made apparent to Australia and New Zealand the need to look to the United States for their security; by thrusting Britain deeper into financial difficulty while the American economy roared into top gear, it swept away those remaining advantages in the East which had accrued from the mid-nineteenth-century supremacy of the pound sterling, as well as of the Royal Navy; by bringing Britain to the very edge of her departure from India, it signalled the removal of what had been, since the eighteenth century, the foundation upon which well-nigh all else had rested. Thereafter, as Philip Darby has ably demonstrated in his *British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968*, the process of decline was one in which perceptions in Whitehall and Westminster tended to lag well behind reality, and in which the policies of decolonization abroad and new priorities at home were for the most part ill-coordinated with planning and posturing on a strategic plane in the East.

In addressing himself to this rise and fall, from Britain's acquisition of Singapore in 1819 to the present day, Peter Lowe has set himself a con-

siderable task, not least given the limits imposed by a book of this length. Several major themes, involving Britain as only one among many states, present themselves for examination along the way: the nature of and assumptions surrounding the entire Western presence in Asia, for example (as explored by Pankaj, Wint, Kiernan and others); the underlying reasons for Britain's international decline from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards; problems of "modernization", urban growth, political ferment and shifting international economic conditions which faced societies in both East and West. Lowe has chosen to content himself with passing references to such aspects of the bigger picture. Nor has he attempted to draw up a balance-sheet of British colonial rule in the Far East, of the kind to be found in, for example, the second volume of D. J. M. Tate's *The Making of Modern South East Asia: The Western Impact*. Instead, he has elected to use the limited space available to present what is essentially a closely-packed narrative survey, concentrating on those aspects - for example, trade and investment - which directly affected Britain herself, rather than on those relating to Asian peoples and expatriate communities.

Clearly, fairly drastic choices of this kind were unavoidable in the circumstances. And if the path the author has decided to follow does not offer exhilarating larger views, it does provide a clear way through a complex subject, guidance of a kind that the student who is new to the topic will find extremely helpful. Room has been found for a considerable amount of detailed illustration where trading figures, especially, are concerned; at the same time, British policy is not so simplified that conflicting approaches within Whitehall - between the Foreign Office and the Treasury, for example - are overlooked. Some of the more notable characters in the story, such as Harry Parkes (British Minister in Japan in the 1860s), are also brought to life in a succinct yet vivid way. *Britain in the Far East* is a book which young students - and some older ones - on both sides of the Atlantic will find instructive and a valuable point of departure into further reading.

## Cloisters for achievers

By G. C. Allen

DONALD T. RODEN:

Schoolboys in Imperial Japan:  
A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite  
300pp. University of California Press.  
0 520 037910 6

Donald T. Roden has made a

thorough and original contribution

not only to our knowledge of Japan's

educational history but also to our

grasp of the motives and outlook of

the country's policy-makers. His

purpose has been to examine the

nature, functions and social influence

of a particular type of school, the

Koto Gakko or Higher School,

which in the half-century before the

Second World War prepared pupils

for the Arts Faculties of the

Imperial Universities. These schools,

of which Iohiko, the First Higher

School in Tokyo (founded in 1886),

was by far the most important, re-

sponded to many respects the En-

glish public schools. Like them, the

Koto Gakko were concerned to

impart character rather than to

achieve intellectual excellence. They

set out to train an elite equipped

after subsequent years of university

study to govern the Japan which had

emerged from the convulsions that

attended the breakdown of the

"feudal" regime. Just as the post-Arnold public schools served to bestow gentility on the sons of those who had risen on the tide of the country's industrial expansion, so the Koto Gakko were intended to instil into "a group of petty-bourgeois achievers the traditional values and ethos of a dying aristocracy". As the admission of students was determined by competitive examination, however, they drew on a "wider spectrum of the middle class" than the elite schools in England.

The Koto Gakko, after their earliest years, oschewed vocational studies and based their curriculum on language, literature and philosophy, especially the literary culture of Europe. From the last decade of the nineteenth century, their student bodies themselves took over responsibility for standards of behaviour and largely disciplined those who followed. Roden compares the "dormitory barbarism" at that time with the bullying and brutality of the English public school. In the new century manners became rather milder. Under the direction of the famous Nitobe Inazo (1866-1933) the enthusiasm of the Ichiko students for sport, "storms" (violent dormitory rags) and idealist German philosophy was moderated. Nitobe recommended, instead, cold baths and the reading of *Satoru Resonance*. In the 1920s the cultural disciplines were carried further. The interests of the students

turned increasingly towards art, literature and philosophy and, above all, towards the problems of the "inner life" or "personal identity". Nevertheless, the schools remained monastic cloisters where "superior persons" were prepared for the service of the state. Even Nitobe, for all his liberalism, thought of the Koto Gakko as the training-grounds for men who would nourish and guide Japan's national ambitions, men fit to hold the reins of power at home and in the colonies, to administer the lesser breeds.

Roden's lucid assessment of the virtues and demerits of these schools is wholly convincing. Yet his concentration on one type of school means inevitably a neglect of other equally important sectors of the country's educational system. The pupils and teachers of the Koto Gakko despised vocational studies but, outside their privileged walls, those studies were highly developed and the men who pursued them played, in their subsequent careers, an indispensable role in Japan's advance. One would not expect, from reading *Schoolboys in Imperial Japan*, that Japan was a pioneer in business studies, that first-class technical education was being provided by a wide range of schools and universities at a time when it was grossly neglected in Britain, or that, from early in the Meiji era, some colleges and universities (particularly their technological and economics departments) were the nor-

mal sources of recruitment for the technical and managerial staffs of the leading industrial concerns. Mitsubishi, it was said, was built up on its founder's money and Keio University men. Critics of the Koto Gakko, indeed, argue that the imperialist policies, designed and executed by the "Ichiko-trained" bureaucrats and the military between them, impeded economic development and ultimately led the country to disaster. But there is much to be said on the other side. It may well be, as the author hints, that the finest hour of the Koto Gakko alumni came after the schools themselves had succumbed to General MacArthur's educational reforms. For, in the years that followed, these men constituted a closely knit, self-confident and dedicated group of able leaders (ministers and bureaucrats) who raised Japan out of the confusions of the Occupation and steered her with skill and resolution along the only course left open to her. It is ironic that they triumphed in these last years of their authority by enlisting the power of the state in the support of the enterprise of the industrialists, merchants and financiers whose ambitions, according to Roden, they had been taught to despise.

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